INDIAN CLASSICS

PRINCE JIVAKA

Kattiyangaran, the treacherous minister of Hemangada, kills the royal family and usurps the throne. Queen Vijaya escapes the slaughter. She gives birth to a son and puts his father's royal ring upon his finger. The child grows up to be Prince Jivaka.

Jivaka has many adventures and regains the throne. But the core of the book becomes apparent when, at the end of the story, a weary Jivaka decides to renounce his kingdom and become a Jain monk.

The story is taken from Jivaka Chintamani, an epic poem in Tamil. It was written by a young Jain monk, Tirutakkatevar, and is considered one of the classics of Sangam literature (300 BC - 300 AD).

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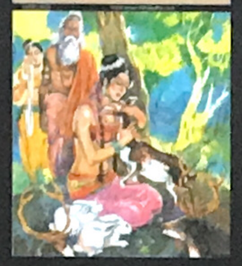

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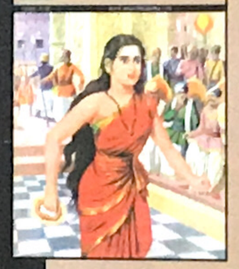

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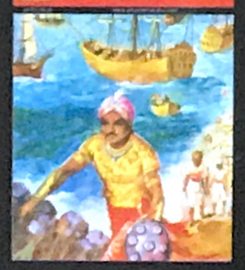

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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

PRINCE JIVAKA

FROM THE EPIC TAMIL POEM, JIVAKA CHINTAMANI

Vol 819 | ₹50

JIVAKA

KING SACHCHANDAN OF THE KURU DYNASTY RULED AT RAJAMAPURAM, THE CAPITAL OF HEMANGADA. HE LOVED HIS WIFE DEARLY.

MY HUSBAND, YOU MUST NOT NEGLECT YOUR KINGLY DUTIES FOR MY SAKE.

VIJAYA, DO NOT WORRY. THE AFFAIRS OF STATE ARE IN THE ABLE HANDS OF KATTIYANGARAN. AND HE IS LOYAL TO ME.

BUT KATTIYANGARAN WAS FAR FROM LOYAL TO THE KING. FOR AT THAT MOMENT IN THE COURT –

STAY WHERE YOU ARE, MINISTERS! I HAVE SEIZED POWER AND AM THE KING NOW. ALL MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH.

A MEMBER OF THE GUARD IMMEDIATELY RUSHED TO THE KING –

YOUR MAJESTY, ALL IS LOST! KATTIYANGARAN HAS USURPED THE THRONE. HE HAS DECLARED HE WILL WIPE OUT THE ROYAL FAMILY.

OH NO... THIS IS TERRIBLE. VIJAYA, YOU MUST GO AWAY AT ONCE.

NO, I WILL NOT GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT YOU.

VIJAYA, OUR UNBORN CHILD MUST BE OUR MAIN CONCERN NOW.

THE KING MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR VIJAYA'S ESCAPE...

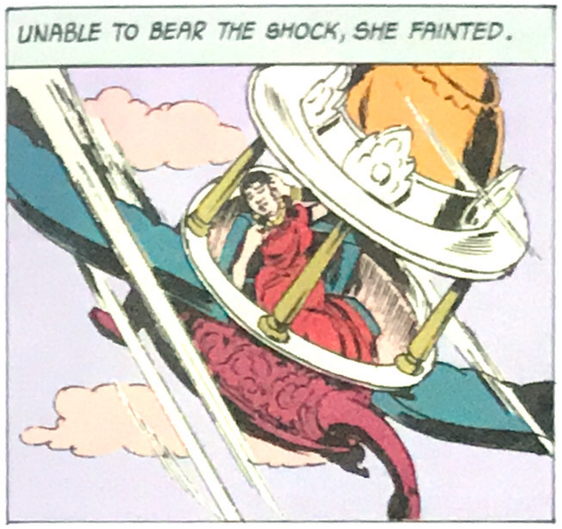
...IN A SPECIAL FLYING MACHINE. THE QUEEN ESCAPED IN IT RELUCTANTLY.

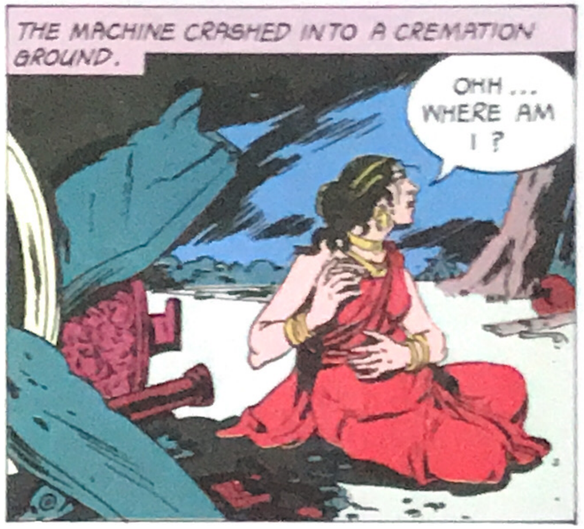
AFTER TAKING LEAVE OF HIS WIFE, SACHCHANDAN THEN RODE BACK TO RAJAMAPURAM AND CHALLENGED KATTIYANGARAN TO A FIGHT.
I AM READY FOR YOU, MOST BASE AND WICKED TRAITOR!

AAH...!

ANNOUNCE IT LOUD AND CLEAR, "SACHCHANDAN IS DEAD; LONG LIVE KATTIYANGARAN!"

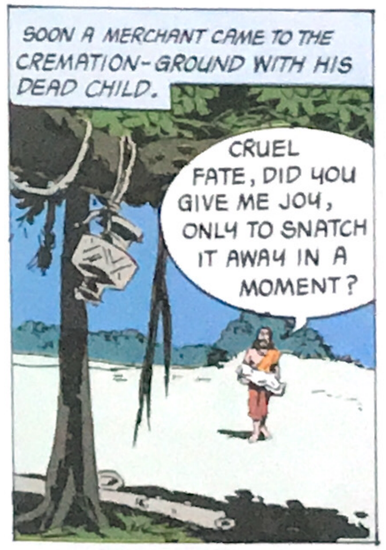
THE SOLDIERS RODE ROUND THE TOWN PROCLAIMING THE NEWS. THE QUEEN ALSO HAPPENED TO HEAR IT.
SACHCHANDAN IS DEAD. LONG LIVE KATTIYANGARAN!


UNABLE TO BEAR THE SHOCK, SHE FAINTED.


THE MACHINE CRASHED INTO A CREMATION GROUND.
OHH... WHERE AM I?

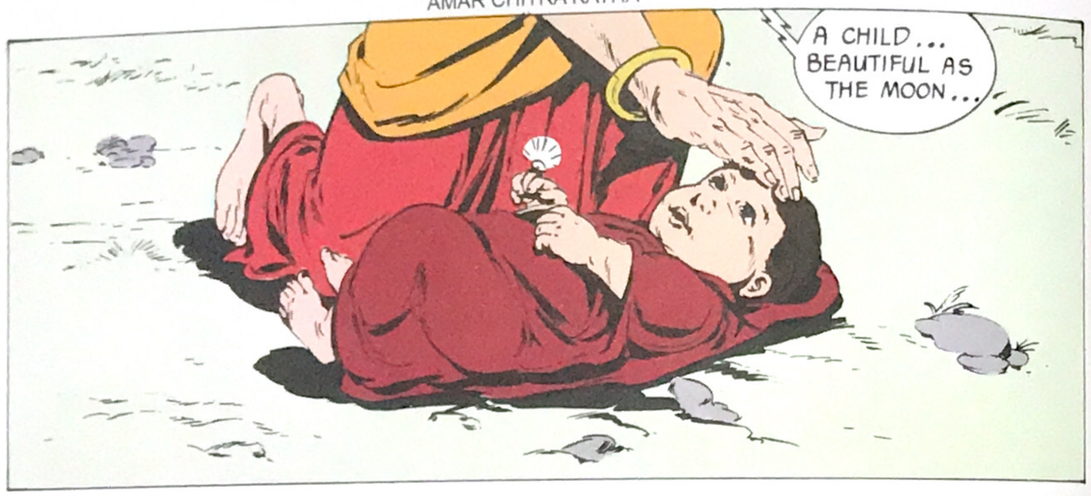
THAT NIGHT VIJAYA GAVE BIRTH TO A SON.
O FATHERLESS CHILD, I WILL HAVE TO ABANDON YOU. BUT FIRST I WILL PUT THE ROYAL RING ON YOUR FINGER...

...GOODBYE, MY SON.
AND THE WEEPING VIJAYA LEFT THE GROUND.

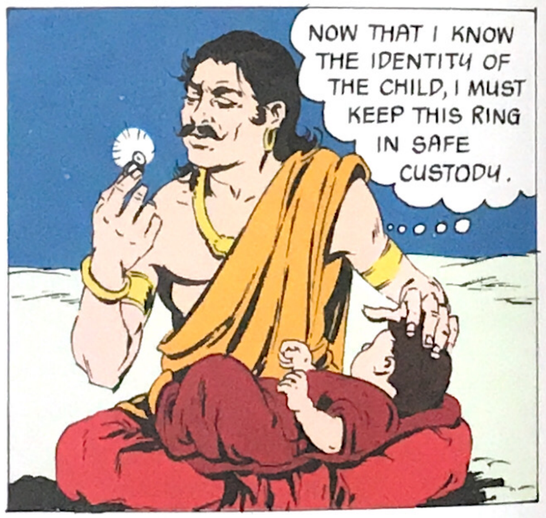

SOON A MERCHANT CAME TO THE CREMATION-GROUND WITH HIS DEAD CHILD.
CRUEL FATE, DID YOU GIVE ME JOY, ONLY TO SNATCH IT AWAY IN A MOMENT?

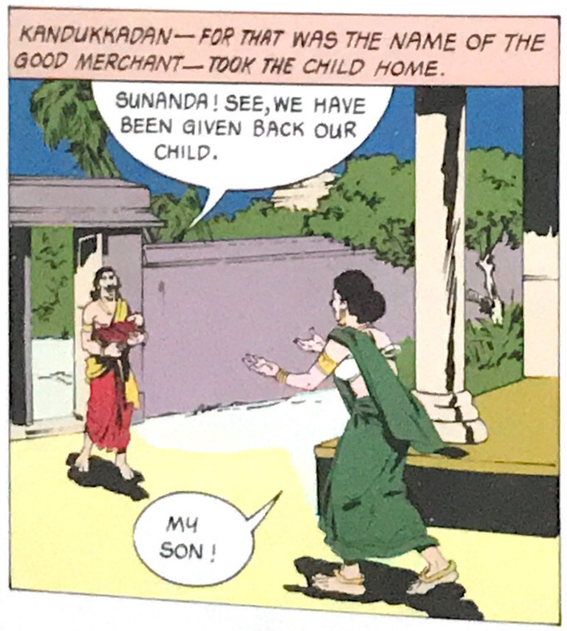
NO MORE CAN YOU SLEEP IN A CRADLE, MY SON, BUT INSTEAD YOU WILL SLEEP ON A FLAMING PYRE...

...WHAT... IS THIS?


A CHILD... BEAUTIFUL AS THE MOON...

...HE WEARS A ROYAL RING... THE KING IS DEAD... THE QUEEN WAS WITH CHILD... AH, I UNDERSTAND...

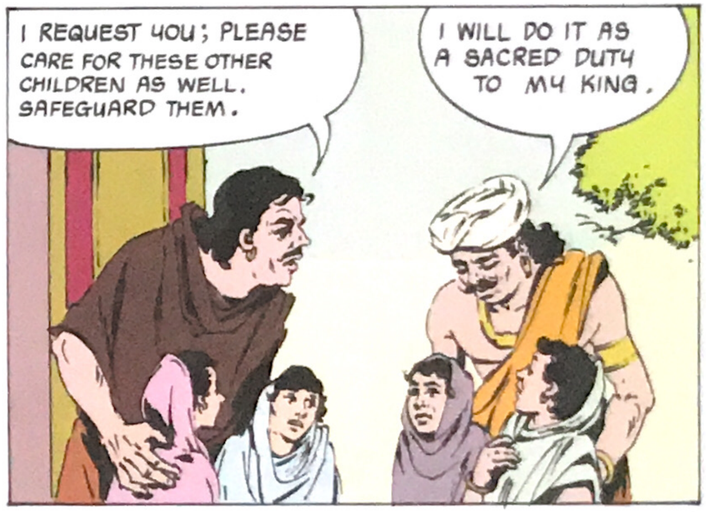

NOW THAT I KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THE CHILD, I MUST KEEP THIS RING IN SAFE CUSTODY.

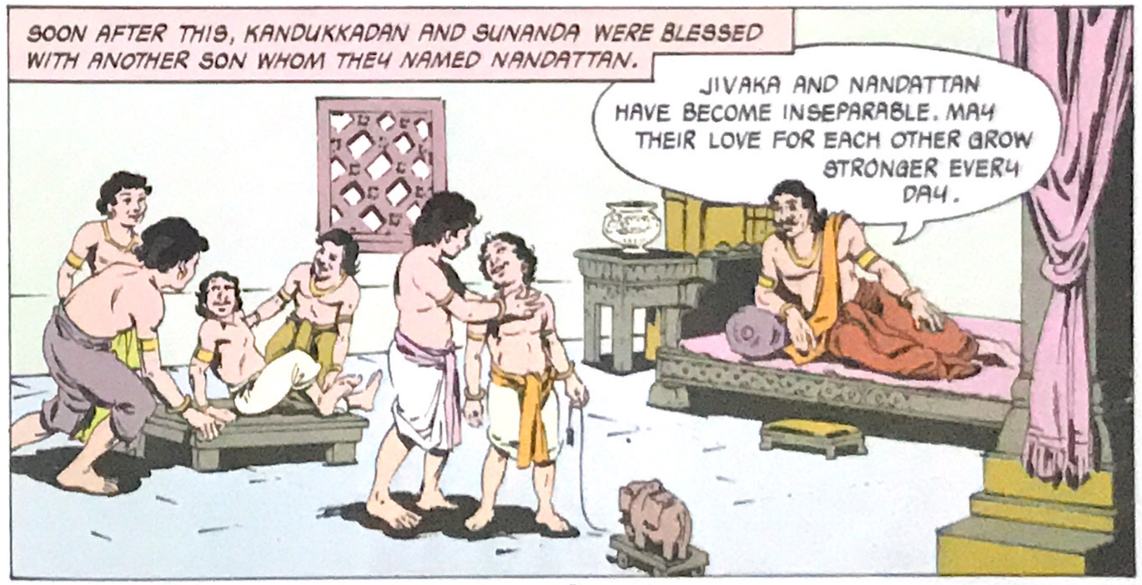

KANDUKKADAN—FOR THAT WAS THE NAME OF THE GOOD MERCHANT—TOOK THE CHILD HOME.
SUNANDA! SEE, WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN BACK OUR CHILD.
MY SON!

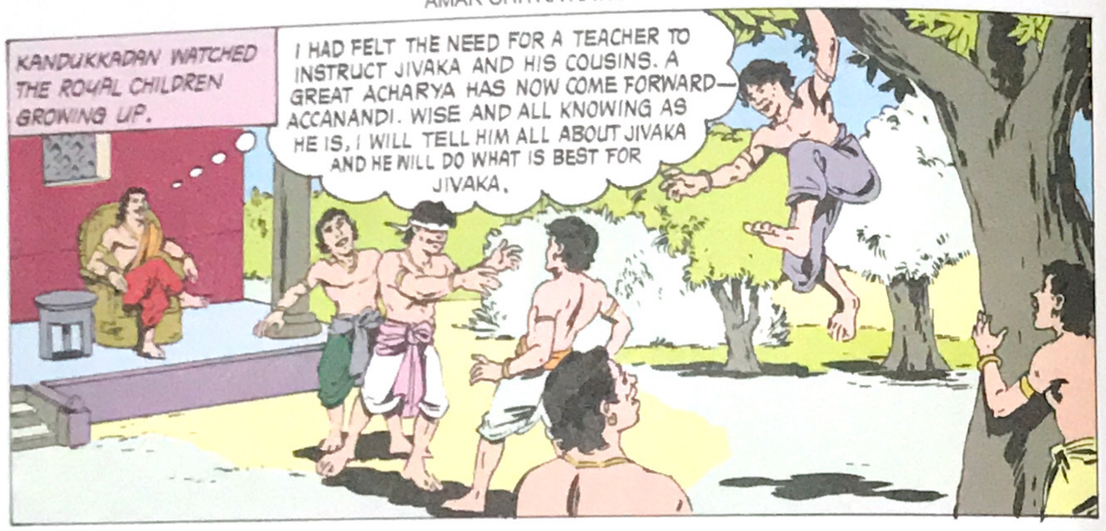
HE SHALL BE CALLED JIVAKA.

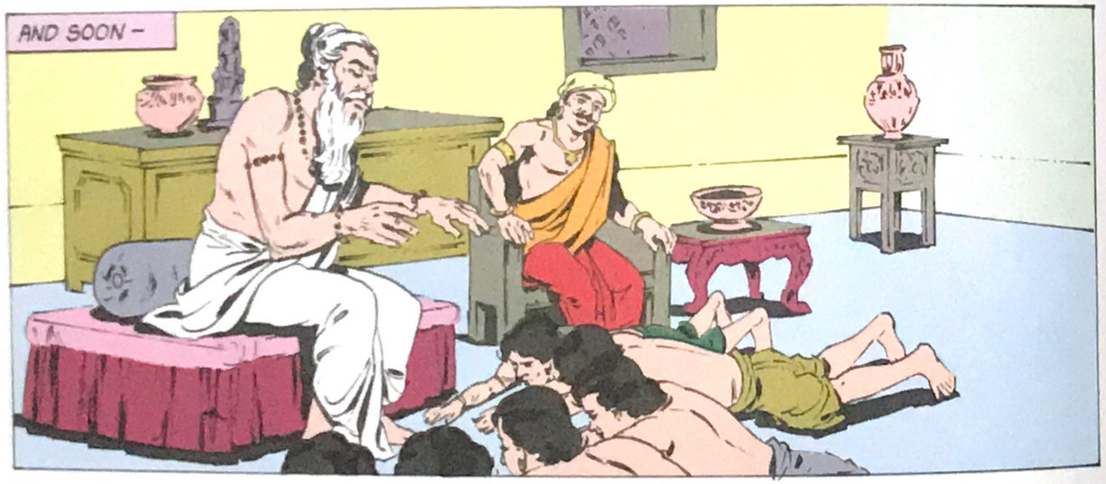
SOON, ONE DAY, KANDUKKADAN HAD A VISITOR.
I COME IN SECRECY. I BELONG TO THE ROYAL FAMILY OF SACHCHANDAN. I LEARNT FROM TRUSTED SPIES THAT THERE IS A ROYAL CHILD IN YOUR HOUSE.

YOU KNOW WHO THIS CHILD IS. PROBABLY YOU ALSO KNOW THAT EVERY CHILD OF THE ROYAL FAMILY IS UNDER THREAT FROM KATTIYANGARAN.

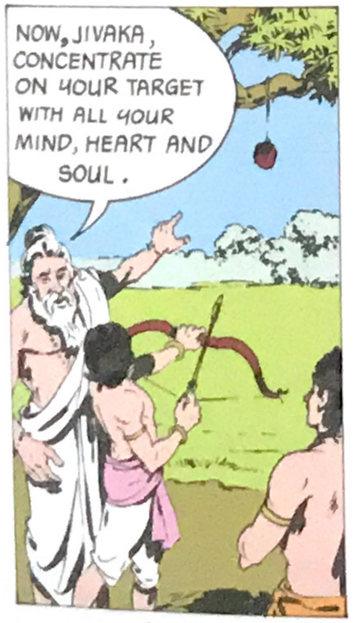

I REQUEST YOU; PLEASE CARE FOR THESE OTHER CHILDREN AS WELL. SAFEGUARD THEM.
I WILL DO IT AS A SACRED DUTY TO MY KING.

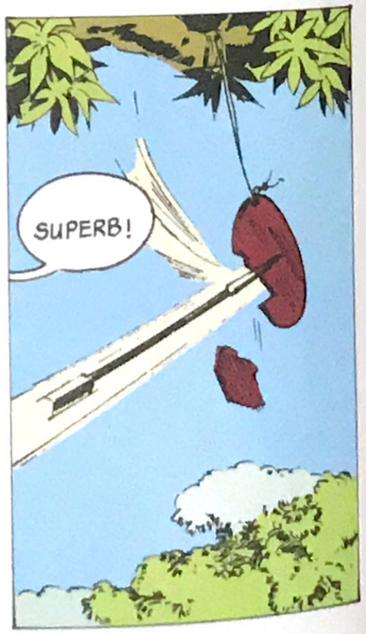

SOON AFTER THIS, KANDUKKADAN AND SUNANDA WERE BLESSED WITH ANOTHER SON WHOM THEY NAMED NANDATTAN.
JIVAKA AND NANDATTAN HAVE BECOME INSEPARABLE. MAY THEIR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER GROW STRONGER EVERY DAY.


KANDUKKADAN WATCHED THE ROYAL CHILDREN GROWING UP.
I HAD FELT THE NEED FOR A TEACHER TO INSTRUCT JIVAKA AND HIS COUSINS. A GREAT ACHARYA HAS NOW COME FORWARD— ACCANANDI. WISE AND ALL KNOWING AS HE IS, I WILL TELL HIM ALL ABOUT JIVAKA AND HE WILL DO WHAT IS BEST FOR JIVAKA.

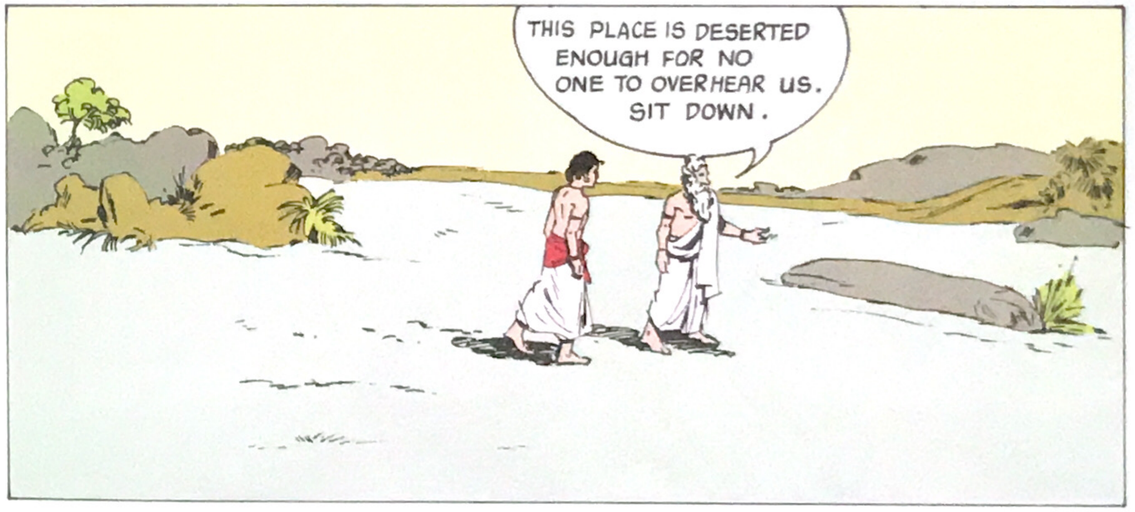

AND SOON –

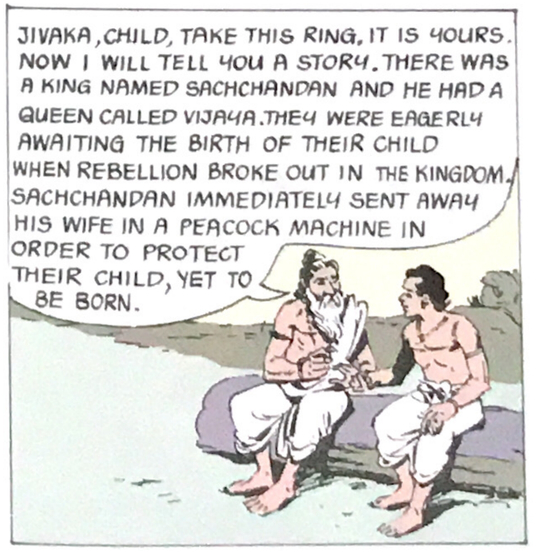
TODAY, I WILL INSTRUCT YOU ON THE INTRICACIES OF STATECRAFT.

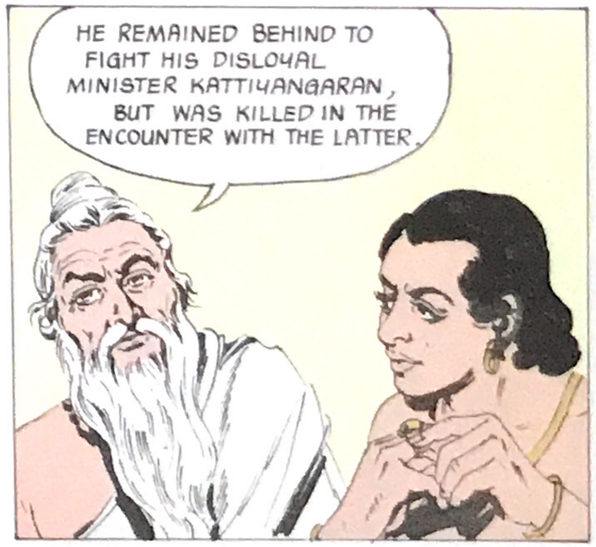

NOW, JIVAKA, CONCENTRATE ON YOUR TARGET WITH ALL YOUR MIND, HEART AND SOUL.

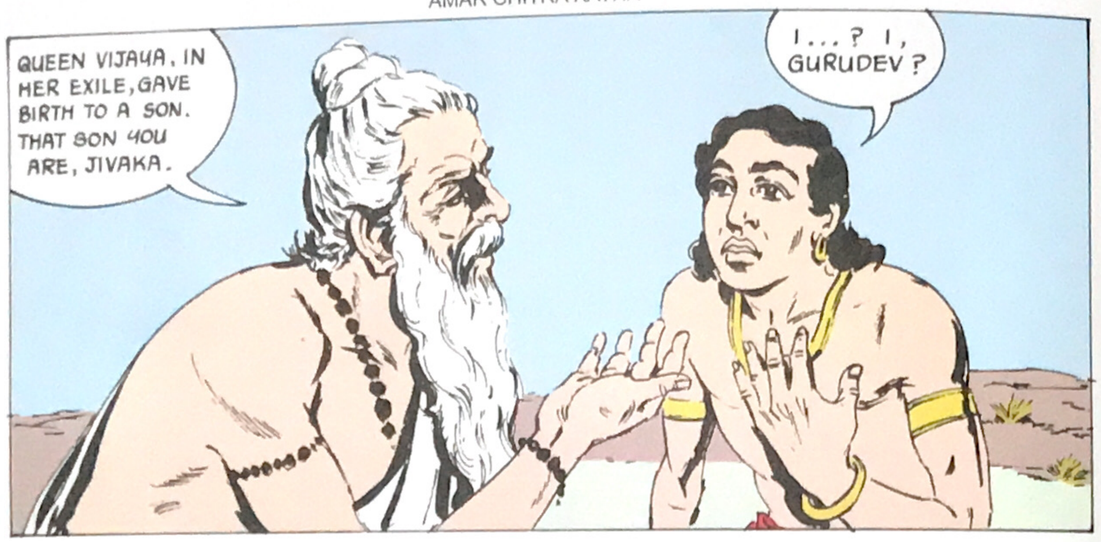

SUPERB!

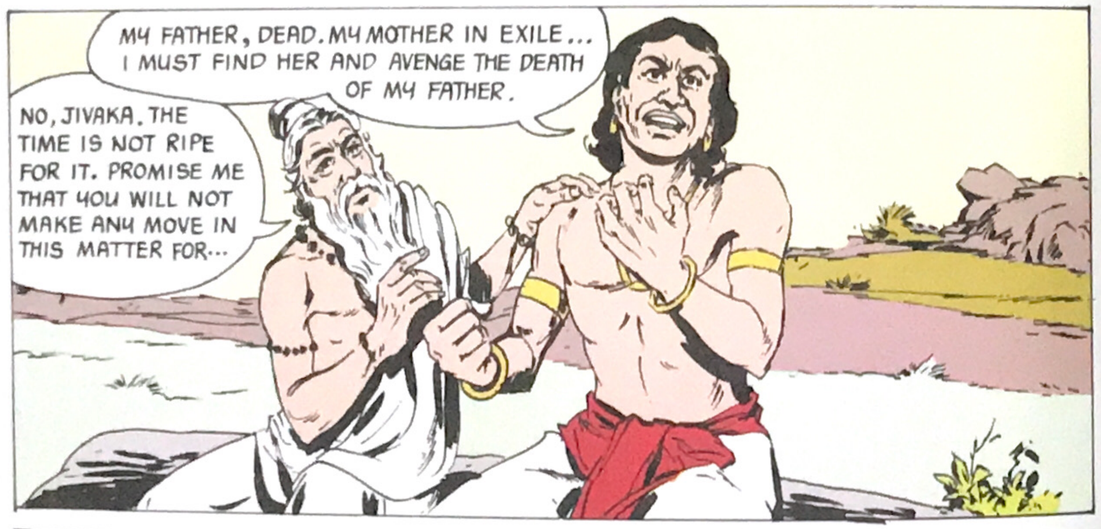
THE YEARS PASSED. THEN ONE DAY –
JIVAKA, YOUR EDUCATION IS OVER. YOU HAVE ATTAINED PERFECTION IN ALL THAT I HAVE TAUGHT YOU. NOW, AS YOUR GURU, I HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH A JOB. COME WITH ME.

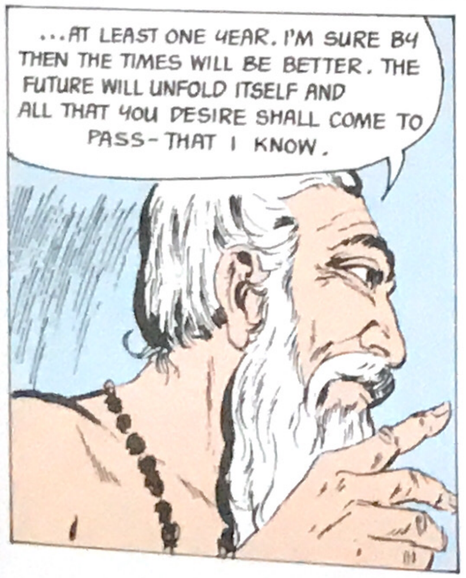

THIS PLACE IS DESERTED ENOUGH FOR NO ONE TO OVERHEAR US. SIT DOWN.

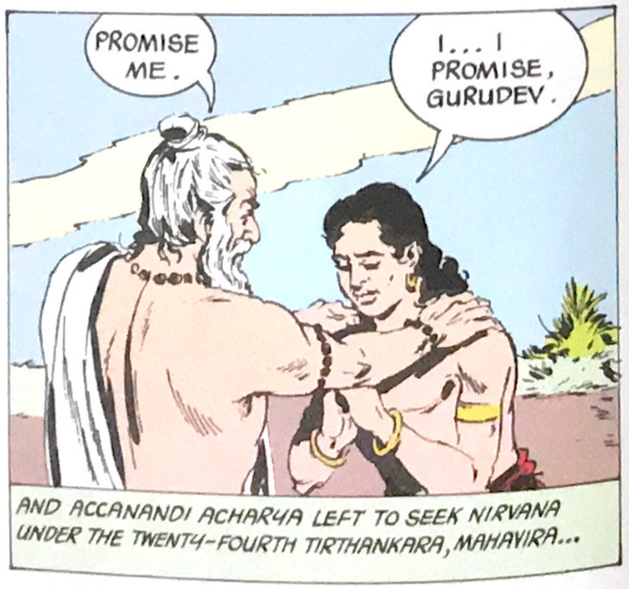

JIVAKA, CHILD, TAKE THIS RING. IT IS YOURS. NOW I WILL TELL YOU A STORY. THERE WAS A KING NAMED SACHCHANDAN AND HE HAD A QUEEN CALLED VIJAYA. THEY WERE EAGERLY AWAITING THE BIRTH OF THEIR CHILD WHEN REBELLION BROKE OUT IN THE KINGDOM. SACHCHANDAN IMMEDIATELY SENT AWAY HIS WIFE IN A PEACOCK MACHINE IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEIR CHILD, YET TO BE BORN.

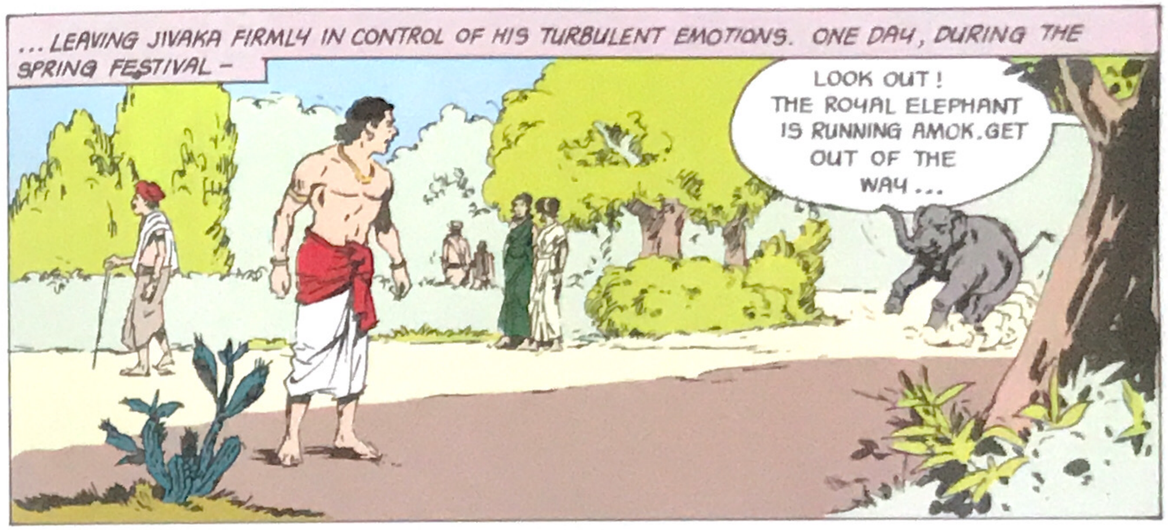

HE REMAINED BEHIND TO FIGHT HIS DISLOYAL MINISTER KATTIYANGARAN, BUT WAS KILLED IN THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE LATTER.


QUEEN VIJAYA, IN HER EXILE, GAVE BIRTH TO A SON. THAT SON YOU ARE, JIVAKA.
I...? I, GURUDEV?

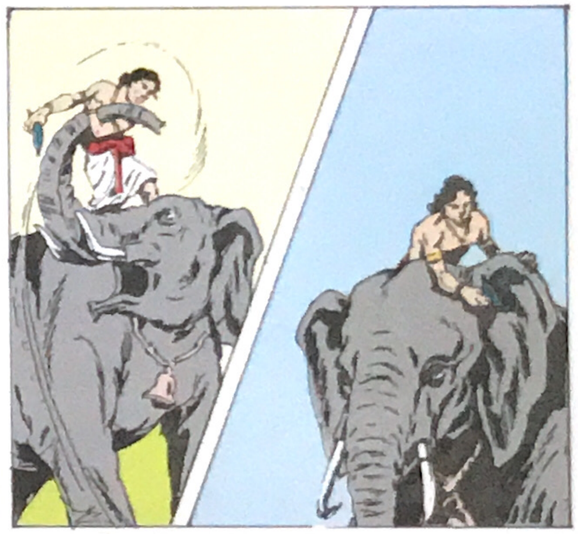

MY FATHER, DEAD. MY MOTHER IN EXILE... I MUST FIND HER AND AVENGE THE DEATH OF MY FATHER.
NO, JIVAKA. THE TIME IS NOT RIPE FOR IT. PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL NOT MAKE ANY MOVE IN THIS MATTER FOR...


...AT LEAST ONE YEAR. I'M SURE BY THEN THE TIMES WILL BE BETTER. THE FUTURE WILL UNFOLD ITSELF AND ALL THAT YOU DESIRE SHALL COME TO PASS - THAT I KNOW.

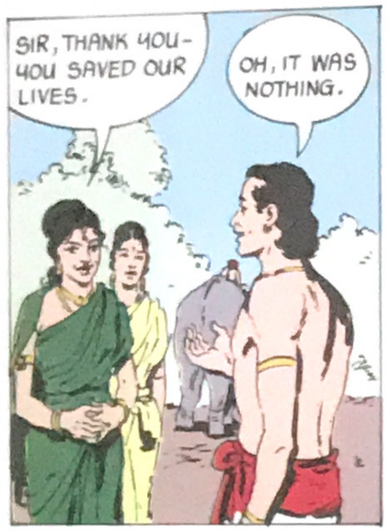

PROMISE ME.
I... I PROMISE, GURUDEV.
AND ACCANANDI ACHARYA LEFT TO SEEK NIRVANA UNDER THE TWENTY-FOURTH TIRTHANKARA, MAHAVIRA...


...LEAVING JIVAKA FIRMLY IN CONTROL OF HIS TURBULENT EMOTIONS. ONE DAY, DURING THE SPRING FESTIVAL -
LOOK OUT! THE ROYAL ELEPHANT IS RUNNING AMOK. GET OUT OF THE WAY...

HELP... HELP!



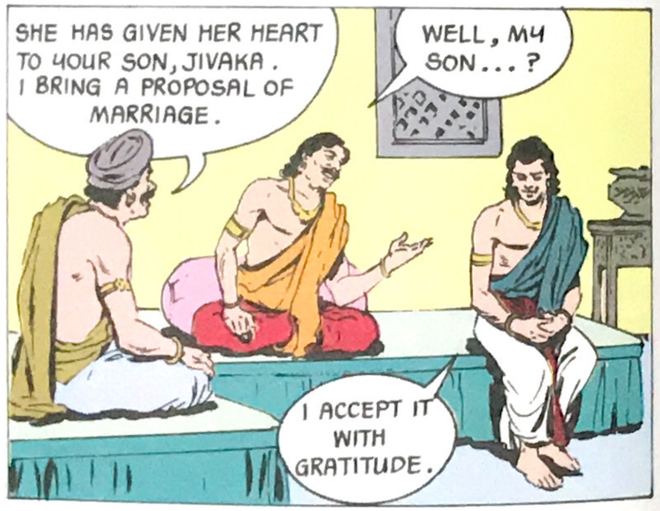
HUSH! BE CALM NOW.
BRAVO! YOU HANDLED THAT WELL, YOUNG MAN!

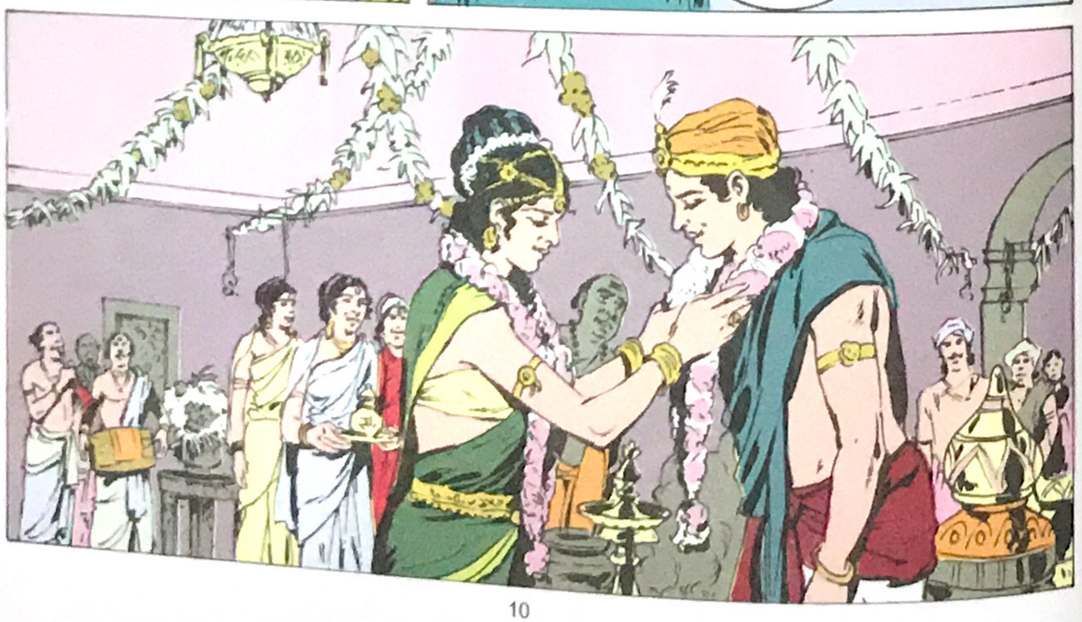

SIR, THANK YOU-YOU SAVED OUR LIVES.
OH, IT WAS NOTHING.

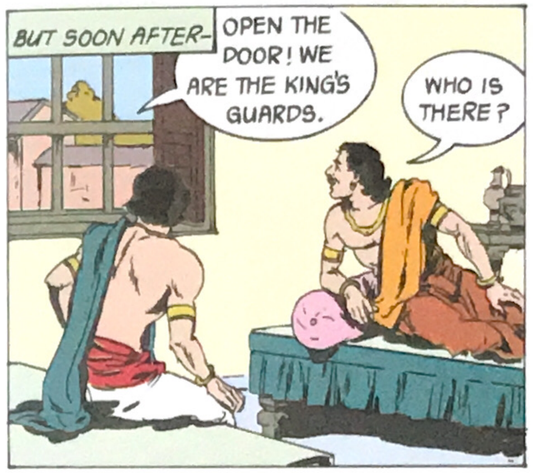
NOTHING? O HANDSOME STRANGER, YOU HAVE CHANGED MY LIFE.

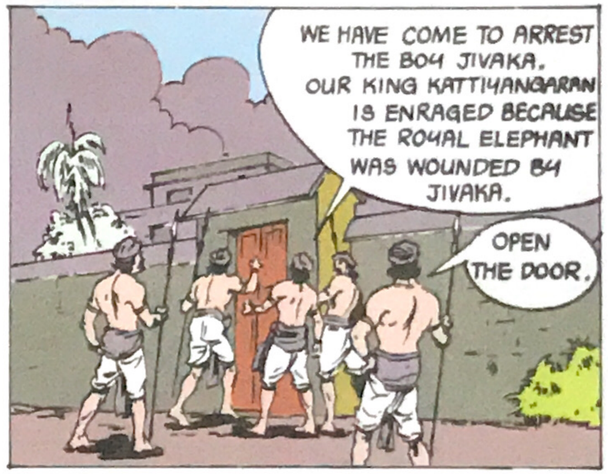
COME, GUNAMALA. WE MUST GO HOME.

SOON AFTER-
MAY I COME IN, GOOD CHETTY? I AM THE FATHER OF THE MAIDEN, GUNAMALA.

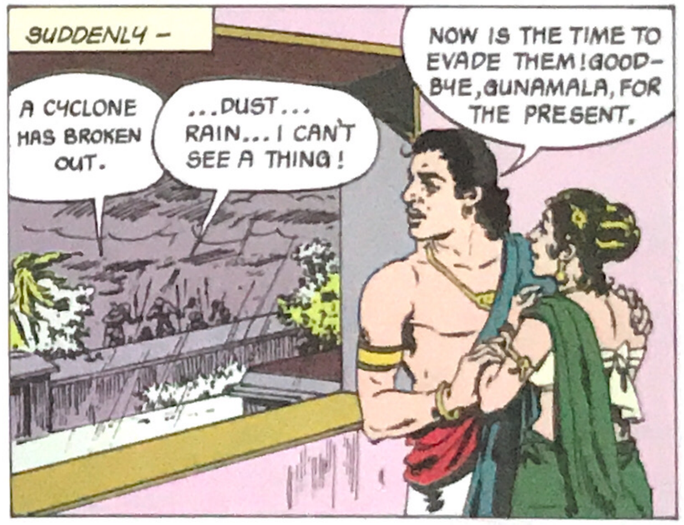

SHE HAS GIVEN HER HEART TO YOUR SON, JIVAKA. I BRING A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.
WELL, MY SON...?
I ACCEPT IT WITH GRATITUDE.

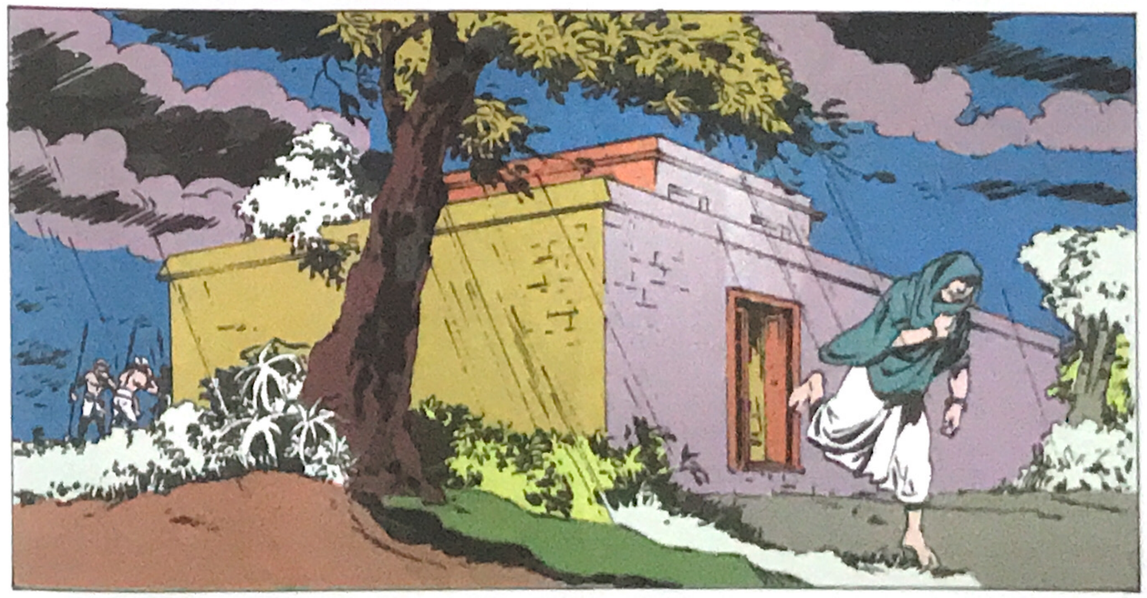


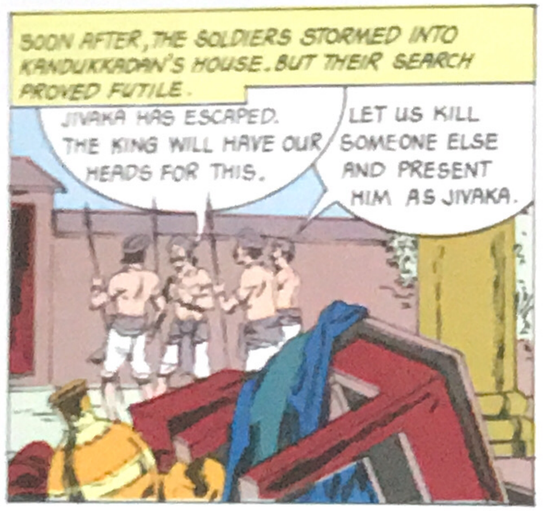

BUT SOON AFTER-
OPEN THE DOOR! WE ARE THE KING'S GUARDS.
WHO IS THERE?

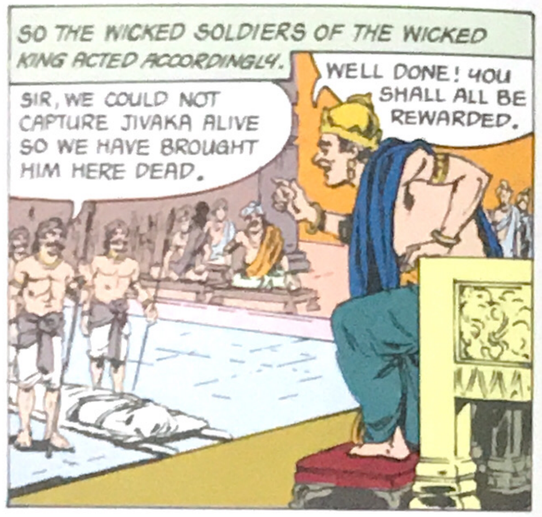

WE HAVE COME TO ARREST THE BOY JIVAKA. OUR KING KATTIYANGARAN IS ENRAGED BECAUSE THE ROYAL ELEPHANT WAS WOUNDED BY JIVAKA.
OPEN THE DOOR.

I WOULD LIKE THIS VERY MOMENT TO CHALLENGE AND SLAY THE TRAITOR WHO KILLED MY FATHER, BUT I AM BOUND BY THE PROMISE OF RESTRAINT I GAVE TO MY GURU.


SUDDENLY -
A CYCLONE HAS BROKEN OUT.
...DUST... RAIN... I CAN'T SEE A THING!
NOW IS THE TIME TO EVADE THEM! GOOD-BYE, GUNAMALA, FOR THE PRESENT.




SOON AFTER, THE SOLDIERS STORMED INTO KANDUKKADAN'S HOUSE. BUT THEIR SEARCH PROVED FUTILE.
JIVAKA HAS ESCAPED. THE KING WILL HAVE OUR HEADS FOR THIS.
LET US KILL SOMEONE ELSE AND PRESENT HIM AS JIVAKA.

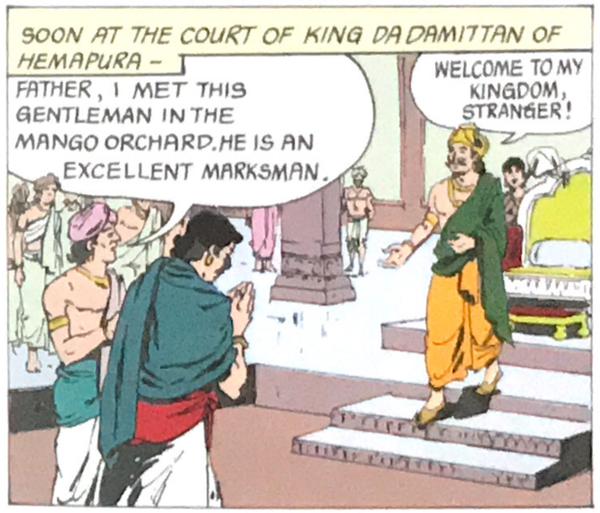

SO THE WICKED SOLDIERS OF THE WICKED KING ACTED ACCORDINGLY.
SIR, WE COULD NOT CAPTURE JIVAKA ALIVE SO WE HAVE BROUGHT HIM HERE DEAD.
WELL DONE! YOU SHALL ALL BE REWARDED.

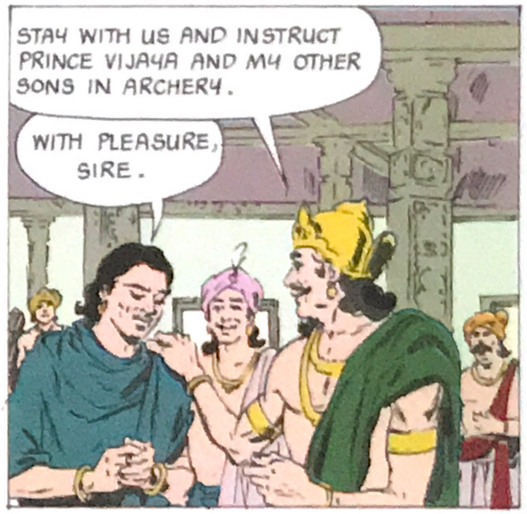
MEANWHILE, THE RUNAWAY PRINCE JIVAKA WANDERED THROUGH THE LAND TILL HE CAME TO THE CITY OF HEMAPURA IN MADHYA-DESHA.

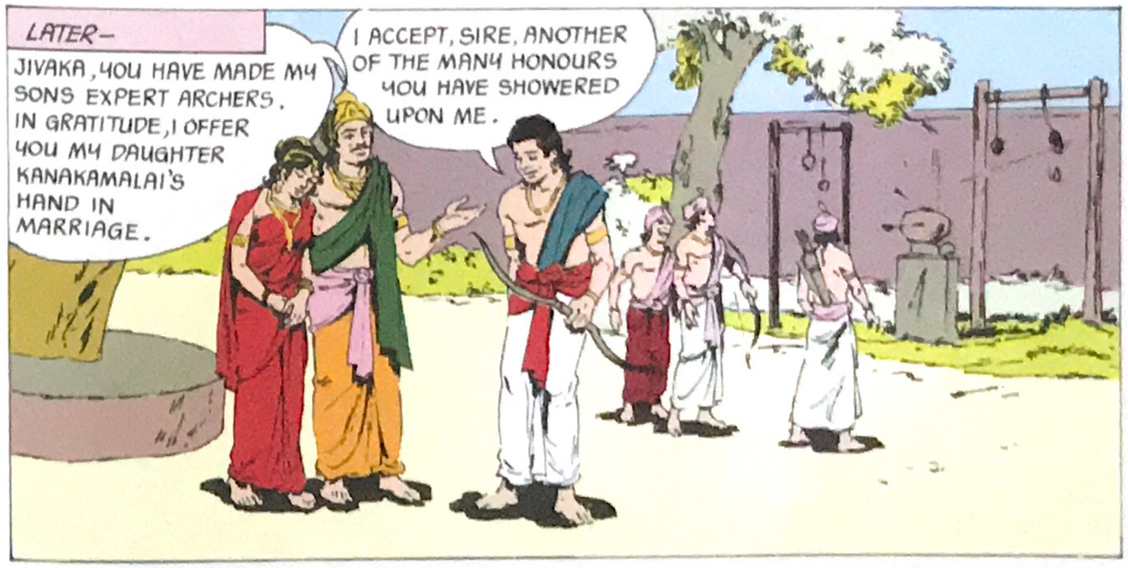
OH! THAT'S THE THIRD TIME I'VE MISSED IT...

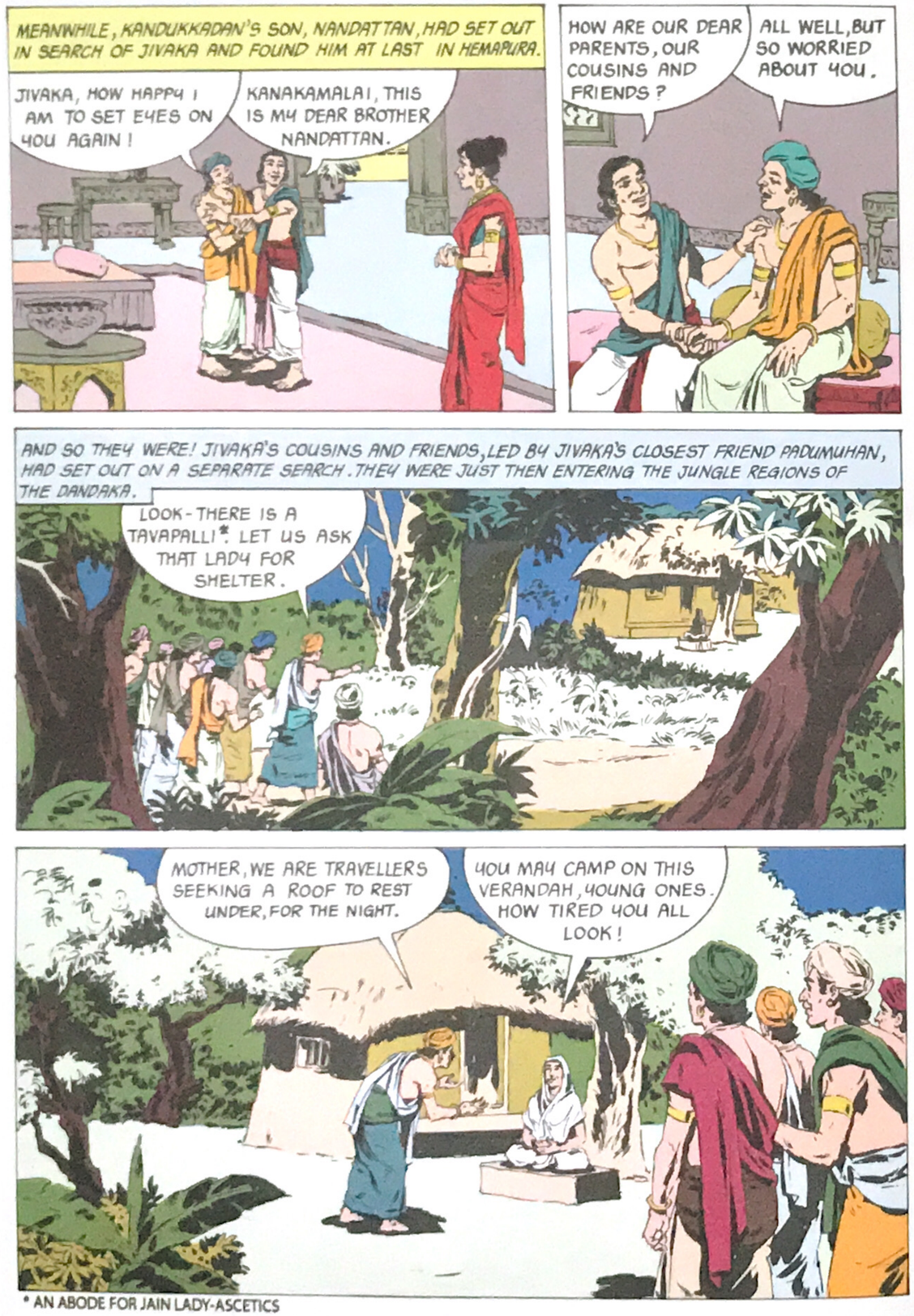
PLEASE ALLOW ME...
WHAT A STRIKING YOUNG MAN!

YOUR AIM IS FLAWLESS! PLEASE COME HOME WITH ME.
I SHALL BE GLAD TO.


SOON AT THE COURT OF KING DADAMITTAN OF HEMAPURA –
FATHER, I MET THIS GENTLEMAN IN THE MANGO ORCHARD. HE IS AN EXCELLENT MARKSMAN.
WELCOME TO MY KINGDOM, STRANGER!

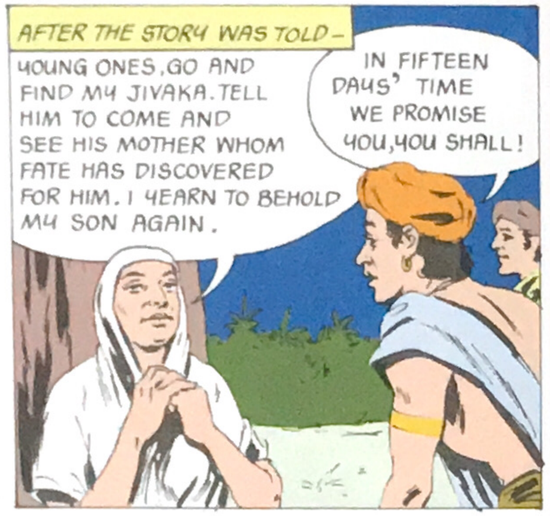

STAY WITH US AND INSTRUCT PRINCE VIJAYA AND MY OTHER SONS IN ARCHERY.
WITH PLEASURE, SIRE.


LATER–
JIVAKA, YOU HAVE MADE MY SONS EXPERT ARCHERS. IN GRATITUDE, I OFFER YOU MY DAUGHTER KANAKAMALAI'S HAND IN MARRIAGE.
I ACCEPT, SIRE, ANOTHER OF THE MANY HONOURS YOU HAVE SHOWERED UPON ME.

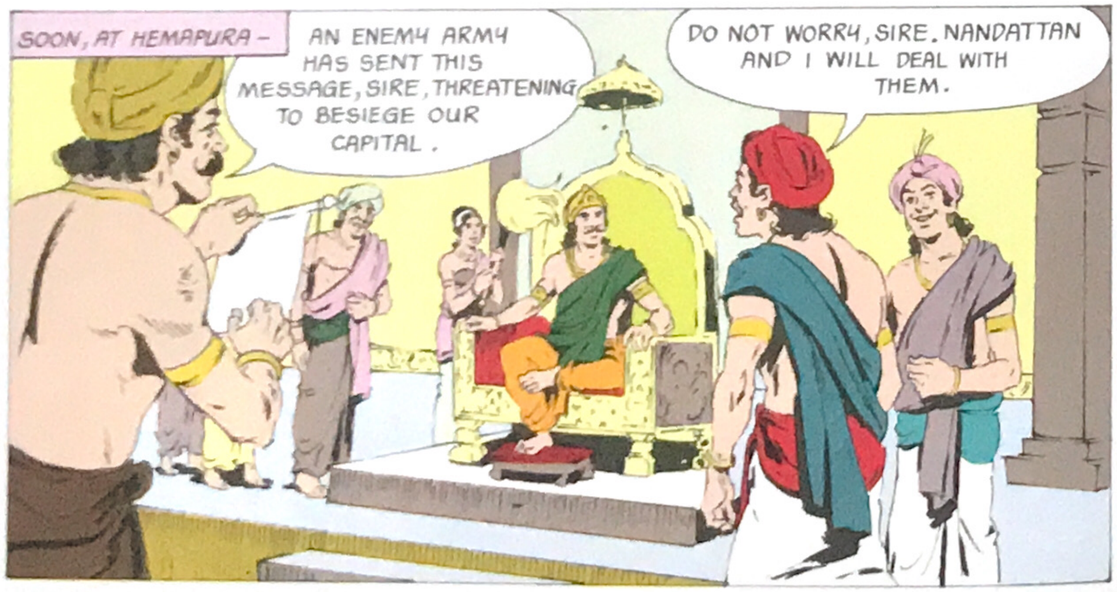


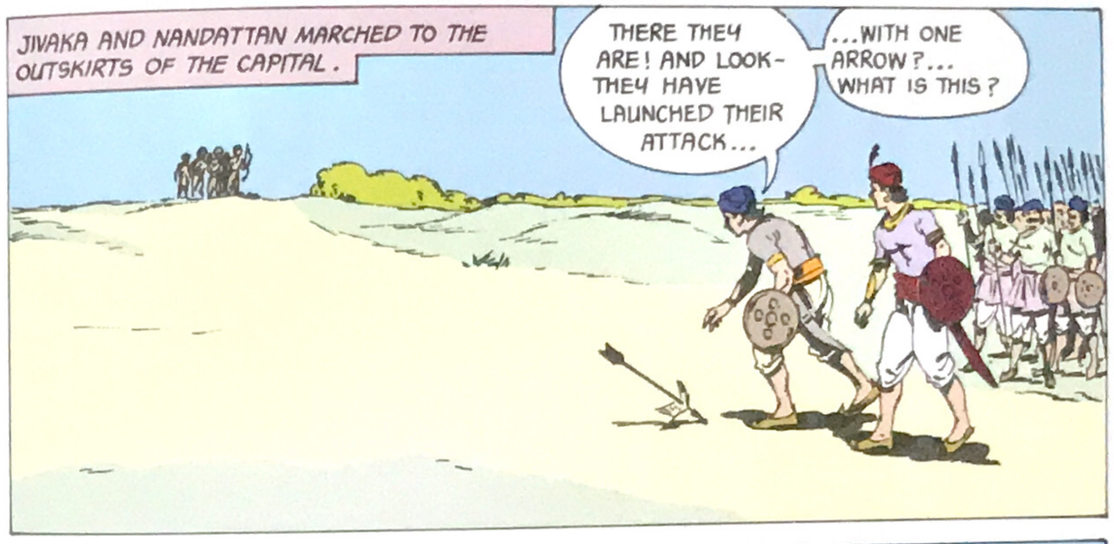
* AN ABODE FOR JAIN LADY-ASCETICS

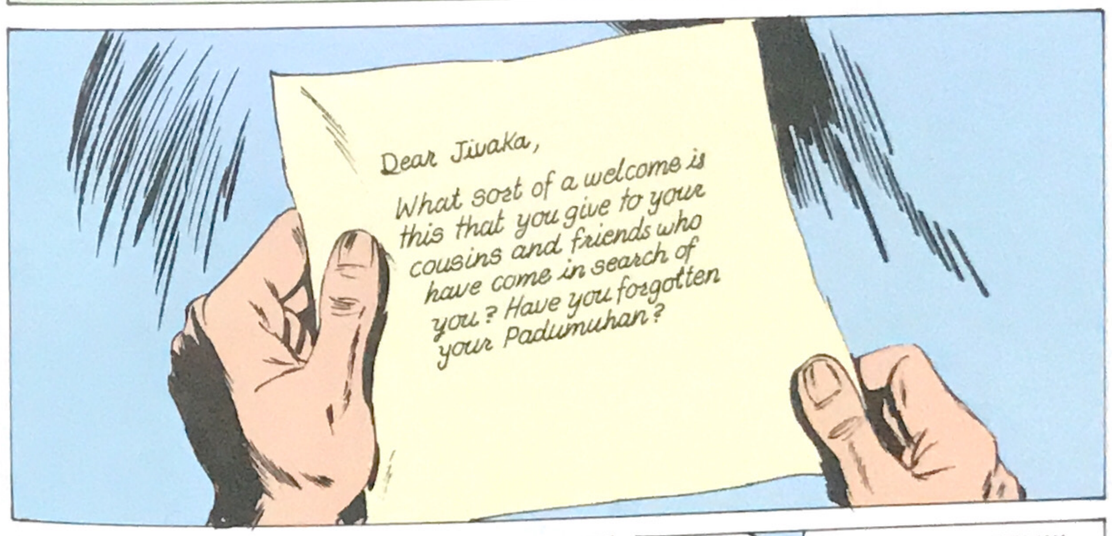
BUT HOW COULD I OBTAIN PEACE WHEN I KNEW NOTHING OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO MY CHILD? TELL ME...TELL ME EVERYTHING ABOUT MY DEAR SON.
WE WILL, AUNT VIJAYA...
...AND THE COUSINS NARRATED TO THE QUEEN, ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED.


AFTER THE STORY WAS TOLD–
YOUNG ONES, GO AND FIND MY JIVAKA. TELL HIM TO COME AND SEE HIS MOTHER WHOM FATE HAS DISCOVERED FOR HIM. I YEARN TO BEHOLD MY SON AGAIN.
IN FIFTEEN DAYS' TIME WE PROMISE YOU, YOU SHALL!

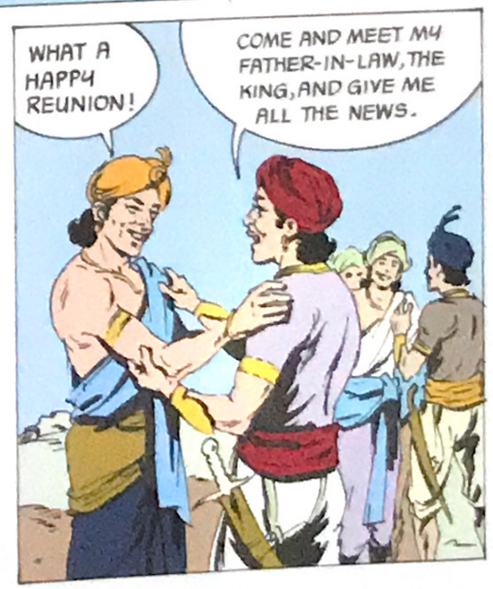
THE GROUP INTENSIFIED THEIR SEARCH, AND SOON FOUND OUT THE WHEREABOUTS OF JIVAKA.
I WANT TO PLAY A TRICK ON OUR FRIEND WHO HAS LED US SUCH A MERRY CHASE. HERE IS WHAT WE'LL DO...

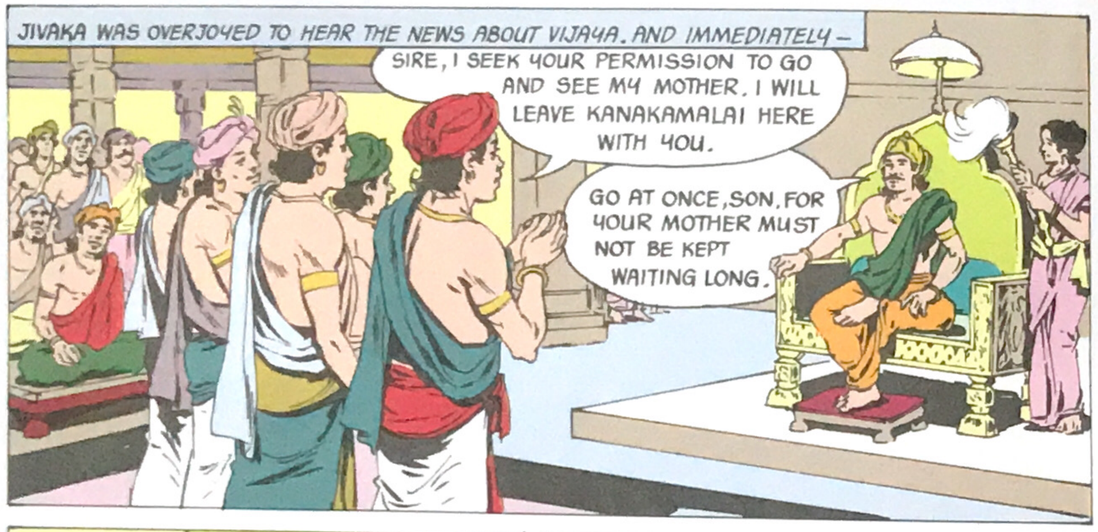

SOON, AT HEMAPURA–
AN ENEMY ARMY HAS SENT THIS MESSAGE, SIRE, THREATENING TO BESIEGE OUR CAPITAL.
DO NOT WORRY, SIRE. NANDATTAN AND I WILL DEAL WITH THEM.

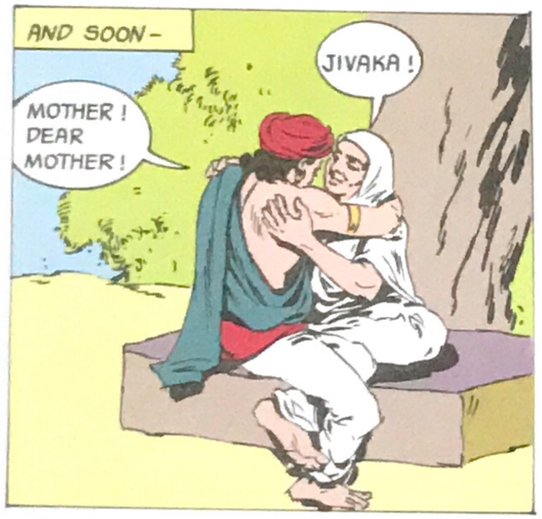

JIVAKA AND NANDATTAN MARCHED TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CAPITAL.
THERE THEY ARE! AND LOOK– THEY HAVE LAUNCHED THEIR ATTACK...
...WITH ONE ARROW?... WHAT IS THIS?

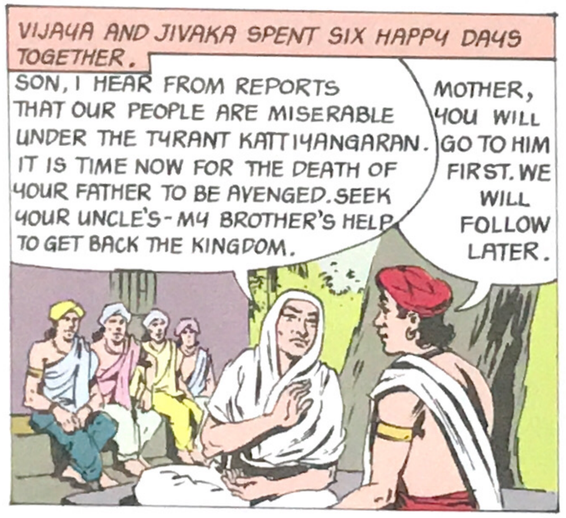

Dear Jivaka,
What sort of a welcome is this that you give to your cousins and friends who have come in search of you? Have you forgotten your Padumuhan?

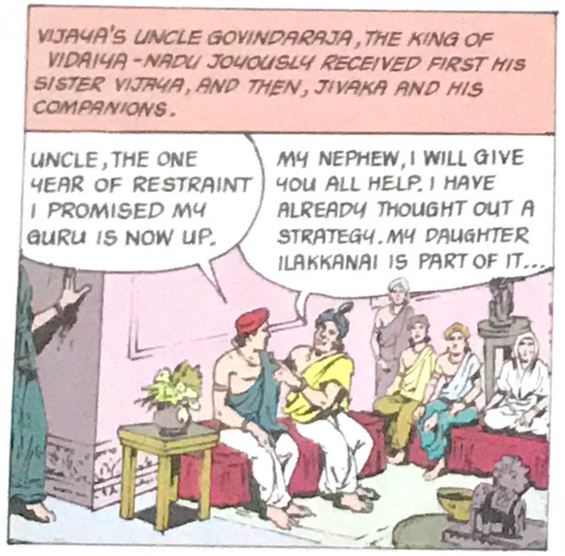
IT IS PADUMUHAN... AND OUR COUSINS AND FRIENDS. THE TRICKSTERS!

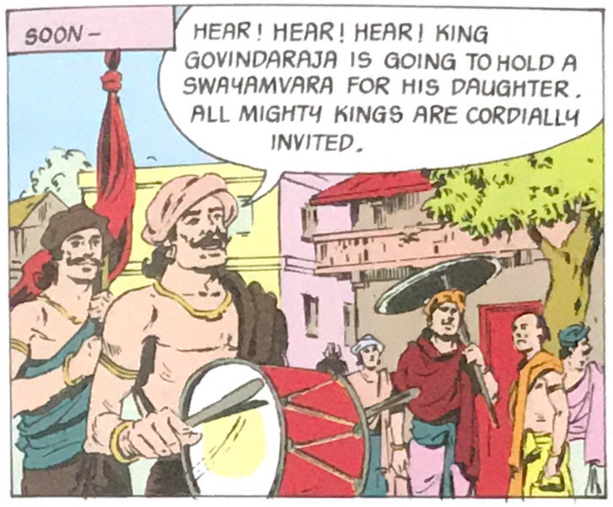

WHAT A HAPPY REUNION!
COME AND MEET MY FATHER-IN-LAW, THE KING, AND GIVE ME ALL THE NEWS.

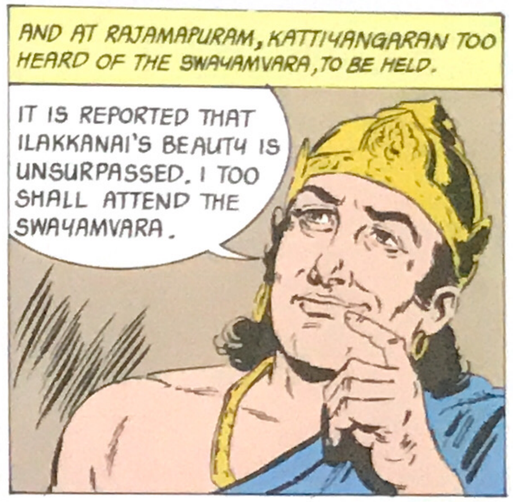

JIVAKA WAS OVERJOYED TO HEAR THE NEWS ABOUT VIJAYA. AND IMMEDIATELY –
SIRE, I SEEK YOUR PERMISSION TO GO AND SEE MY MOTHER. I WILL LEAVE KANAKAMALAI HERE WITH YOU.
GO AT ONCE, SON, FOR YOUR MOTHER MUST NOT BE KEPT WAITING LONG.

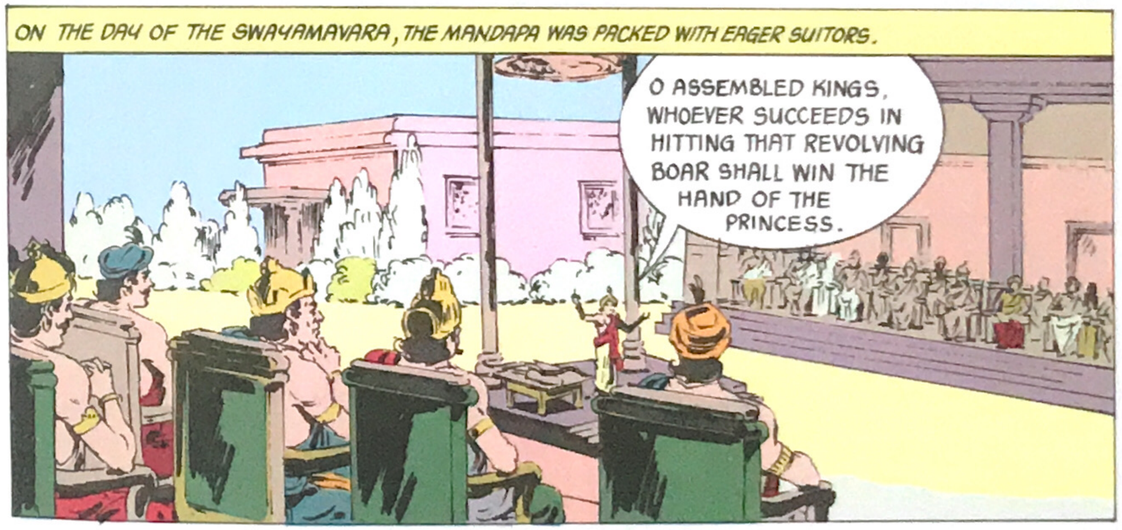

AND SOON –
MOTHER! DEAR MOTHER!
JIVAKA!


VIJAYA AND JIVAKA SPENT SIX HAPPY DAYS TOGETHER.
SON, I HEAR FROM REPORTS THAT OUR PEOPLE ARE MISERABLE UNDER THE TYRANT KATTIYANGARAN. IT IS TIME NOW FOR THE DEATH OF YOUR FATHER TO BE AVENGED. SEEK YOUR UNCLE'S - MY BROTHER'S HELP TO GET BACK THE KINGDOM.
MOTHER, YOU WILL GO TO HIM FIRST. WE WILL FOLLOW LATER.

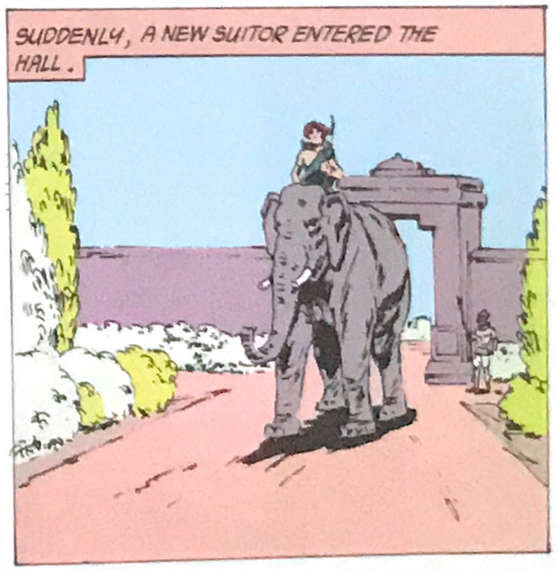

VIJAYA'S UNCLE GOVINDARAJA, THE KING OF VIDAIYA-NADU JOYOUSLY RECEIVED FIRST HIS SISTER VIJAYA, AND THEN, JIVAKA AND HIS COMPANIONS.
UNCLE, THE ONE YEAR OF RESTRAINT I PROMISED MY GURU IS NOW UP.
MY NEPHEW, I WILL GIVE YOU ALL HELP. I HAVE ALREADY THOUGHT OUT A STRATEGY. MY DAUGHTER ILAKKANAI IS PART OF IT...

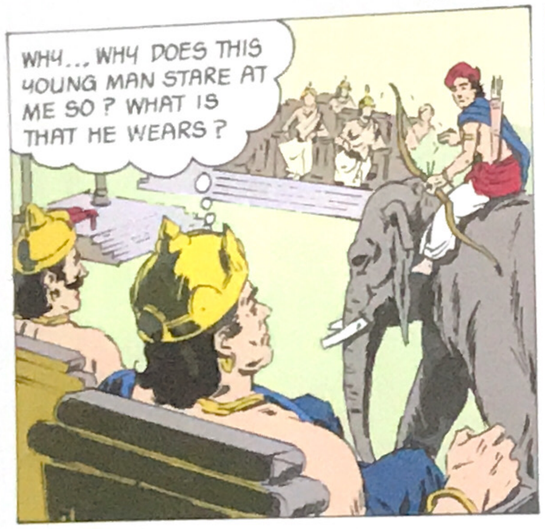

SOON –
HEAR! HEAR! HEAR! KING GOVINDARAJA IS GOING TO HOLD A SWAYAMVARA FOR HIS DAUGHTER. ALL MIGHTY KINGS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED.

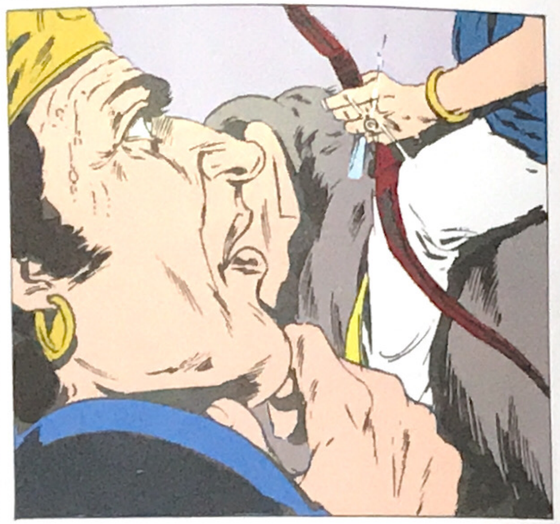

AND AT RAJAMAPURAM, KATTIYANGARAN TOO HEARD OF THE SWAYAMVARA, TO BE HELD.
IT IS REPORTED THAT ILAKKANAI'S BEAUTY IS UNSURPASSED. I TOO SHALL ATTEND THE SWAYAMVARA.

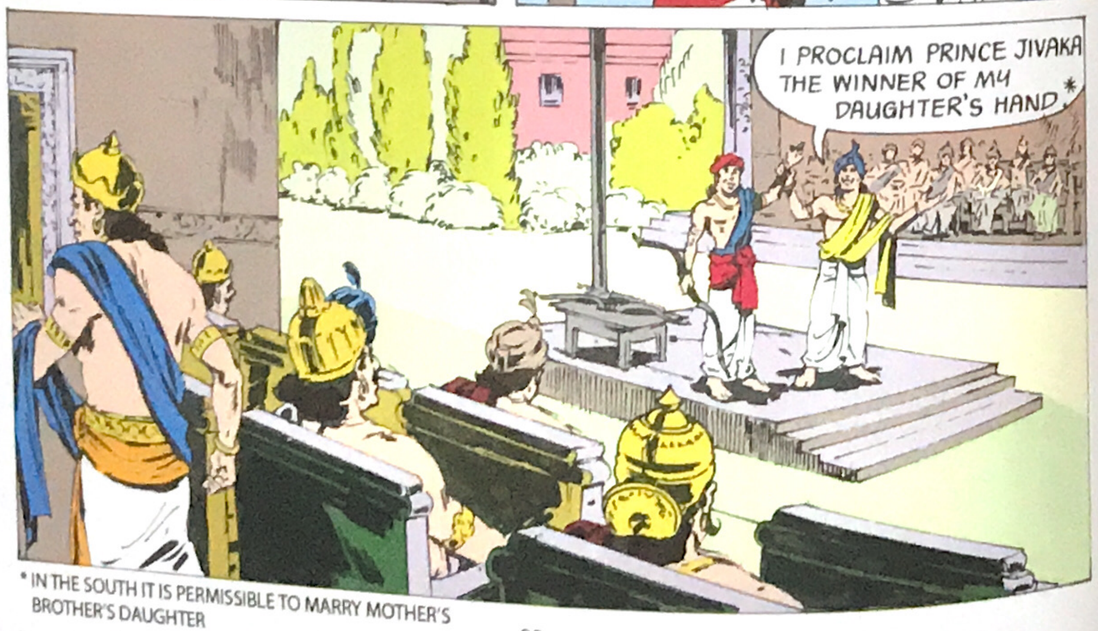

ON THE DAY OF THE SWAYAMAVARA, THE MANDAPA WAS PACKED WITH EAGER SUITORS.
O ASSEMBLED KINGS, WHOEVER SUCCEEDS IN HITTING THAT REVOLVING BOAR SHALL WIN THE HAND OF THE PRINCESS.

EVERY SUITOR CAME FORWARD TO TRY, BUT FAILED.

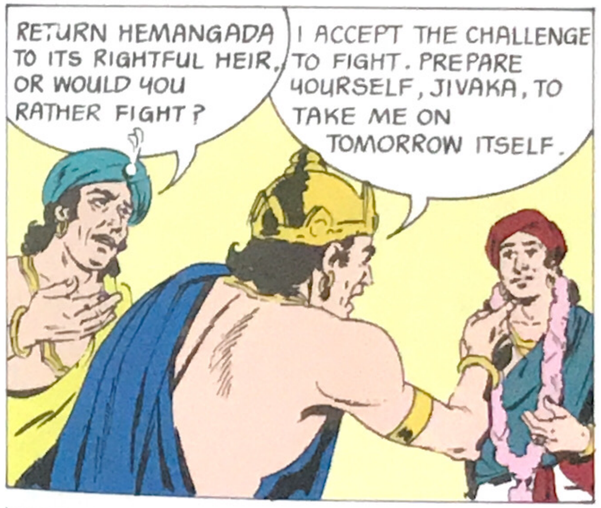

SUDDENLY, A NEW SUITOR ENTERED THE HALL.

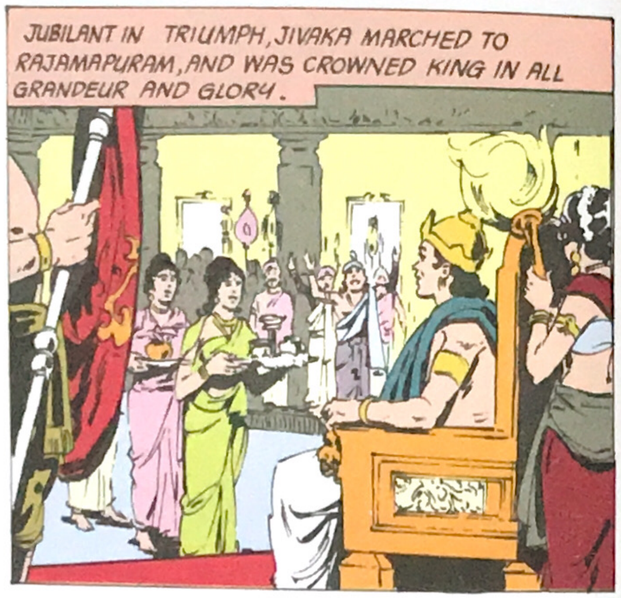


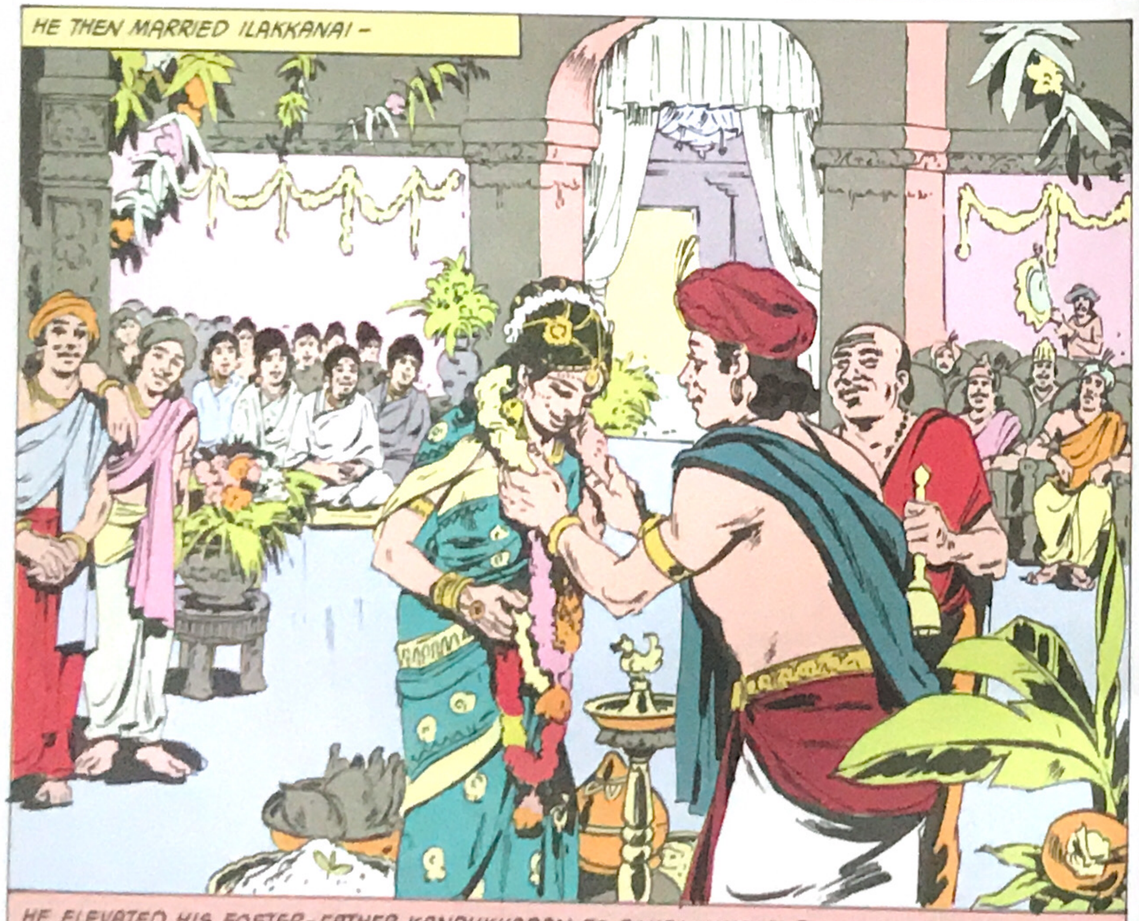




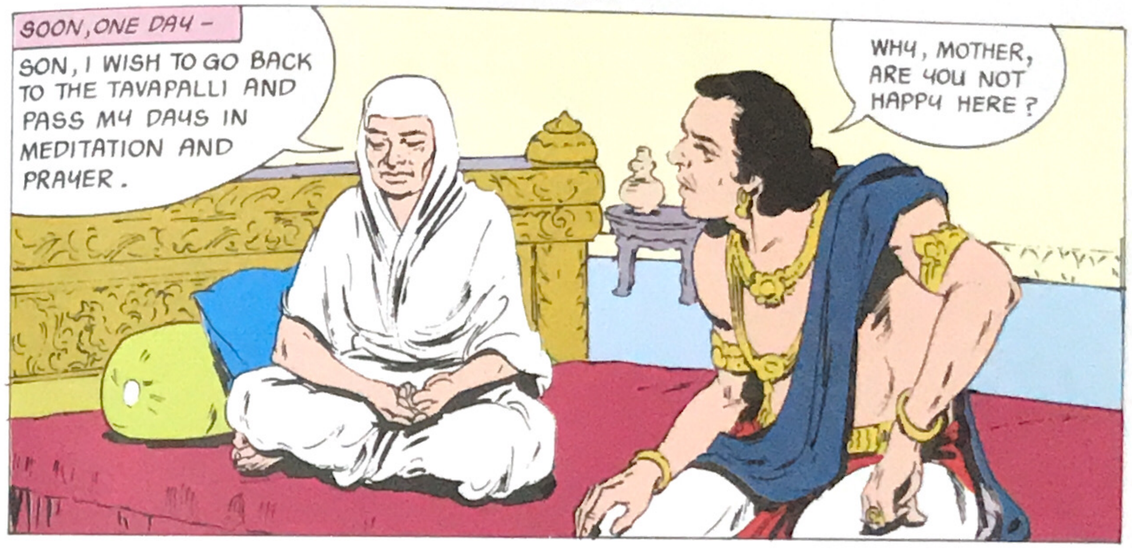
* IN THE SOUTH IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO MARRY MOTHER'S BROTHER'S DAUGHTER

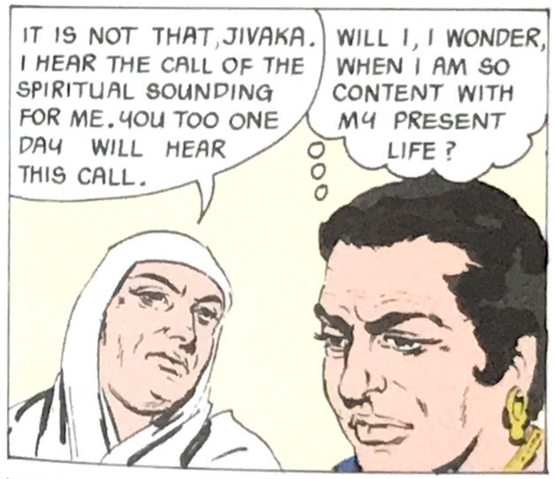


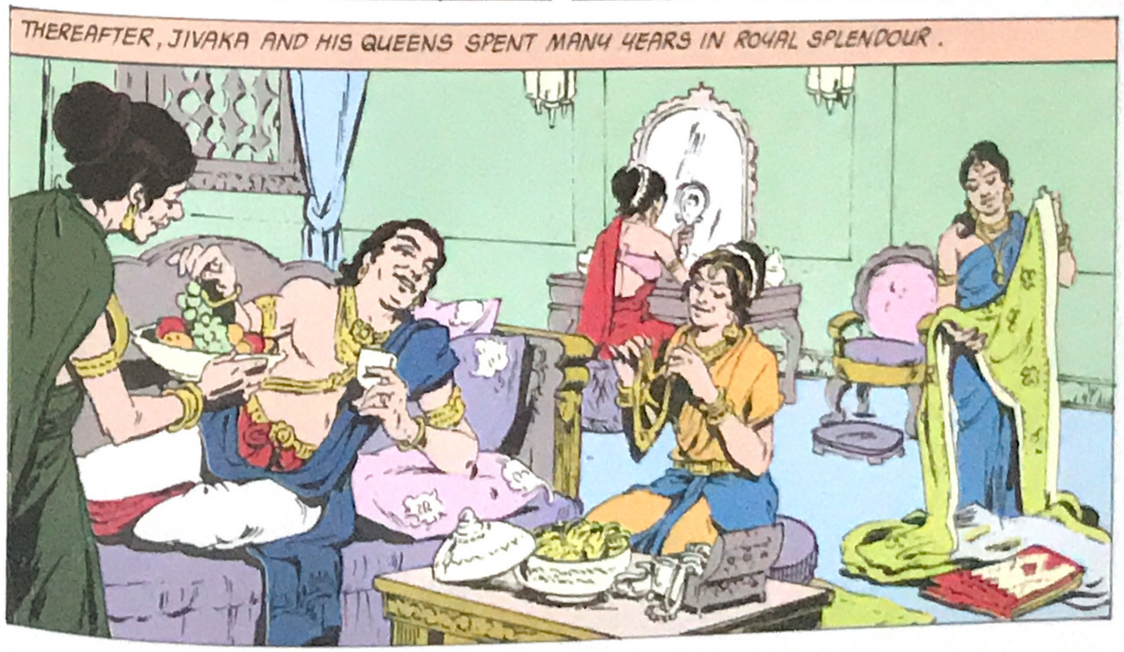


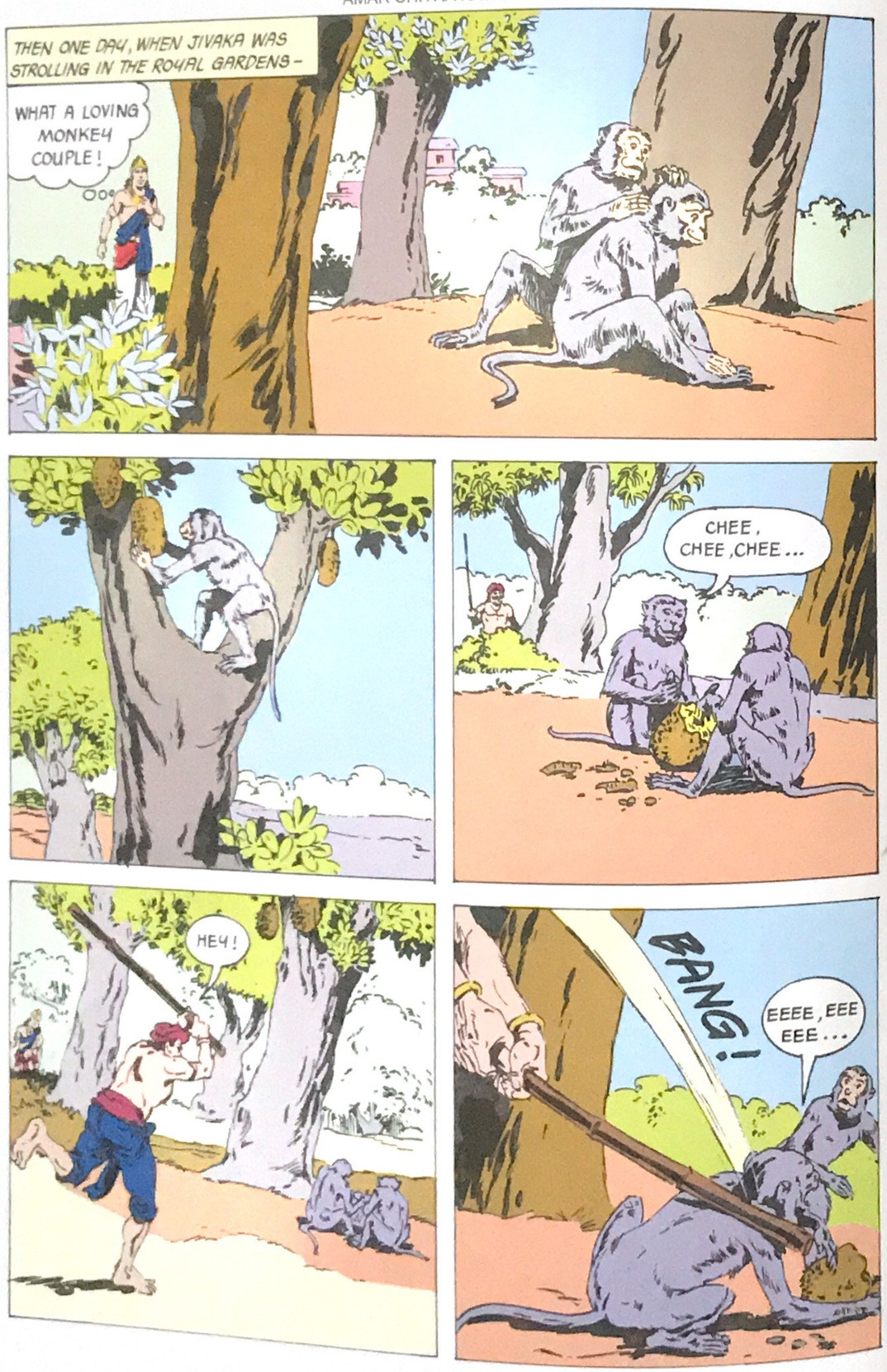


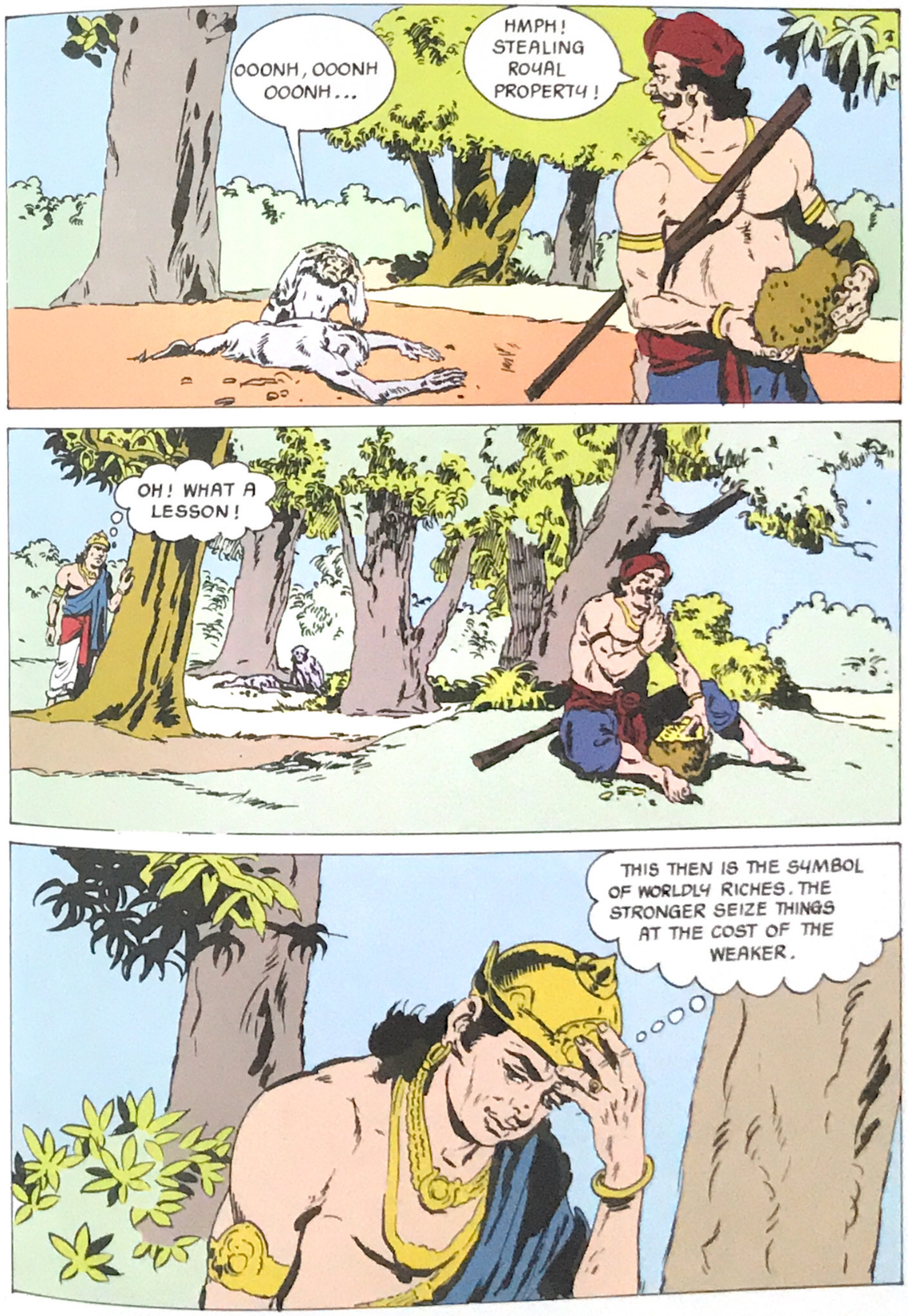
HE ELEVATED HIS FOSTER-FATHER KANDUKKADAN, TO ROYAL HONOUR, RICHLY REWARDED HIS COUSINS AND FRIENDS AND GAVE AWAY KATTIYANGARAN'S RICHES TO HIS UNCLE, GOVINDARAJA. PROSPERITY AND PLENTY REIGNED ONCE AGAIN IN HEMANGADA UNDER JIVAKA'S RULE MAKING VIJAYA'S DREAM COME TRUE.



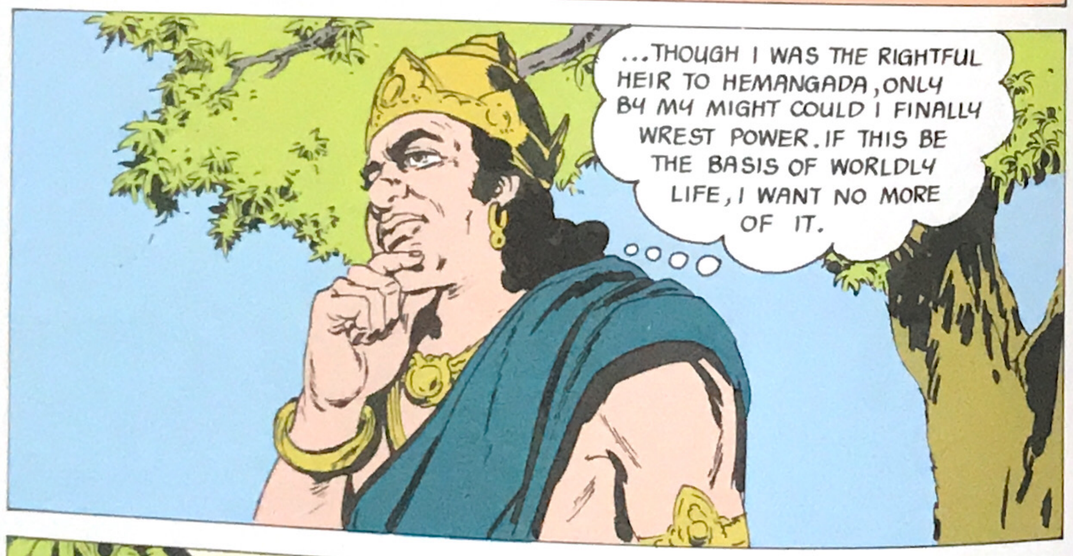


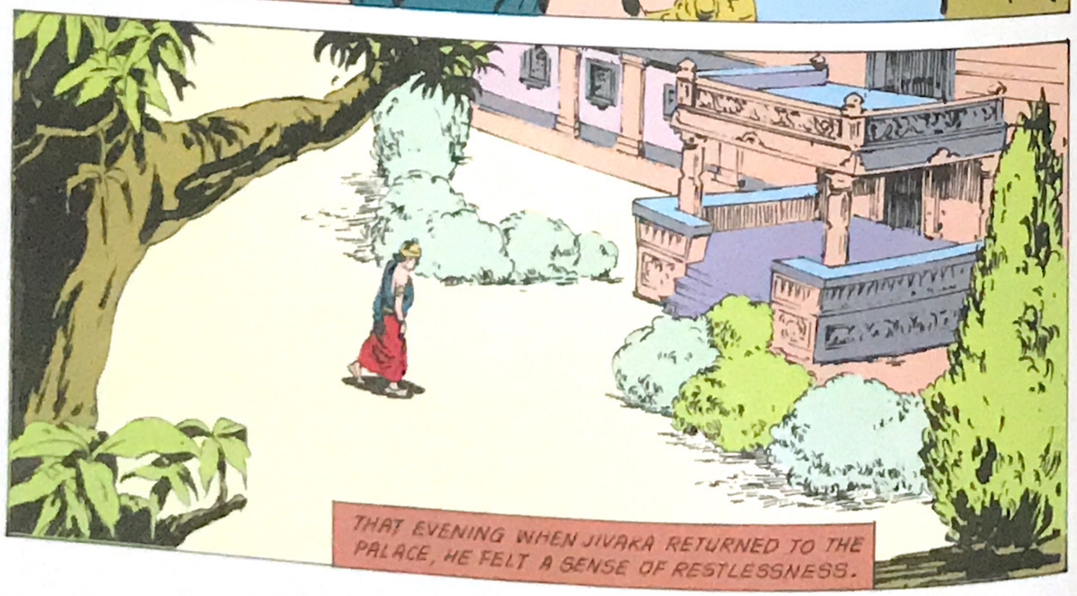



THEN ONE DAY, WHEN JIVAKA WAS STROLLING IN THE ROYAL GARDENS –
WHAT A LOVING MONKEY COUPLE!
CHEE, CHEE, CHEE...
HEY!
BANG!
EEEE, EEE EEE...

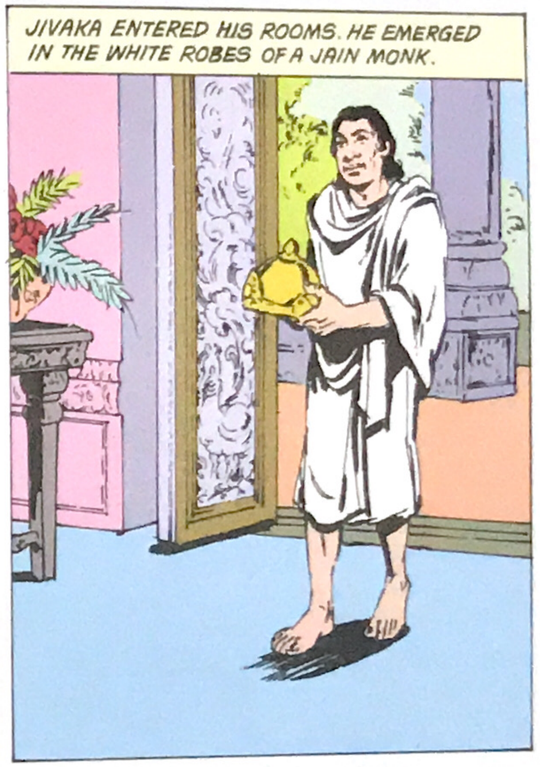

OOONH, OOONH OOONH...
HMPH! STEALING ROYAL PROPERTY!
OH! WHAT A LESSON!
THIS THEN IS THE SYMBOL OF WORLDLY RICHES. THE STRONGER SEIZE THINGS AT THE COST OF THE WEAKER.

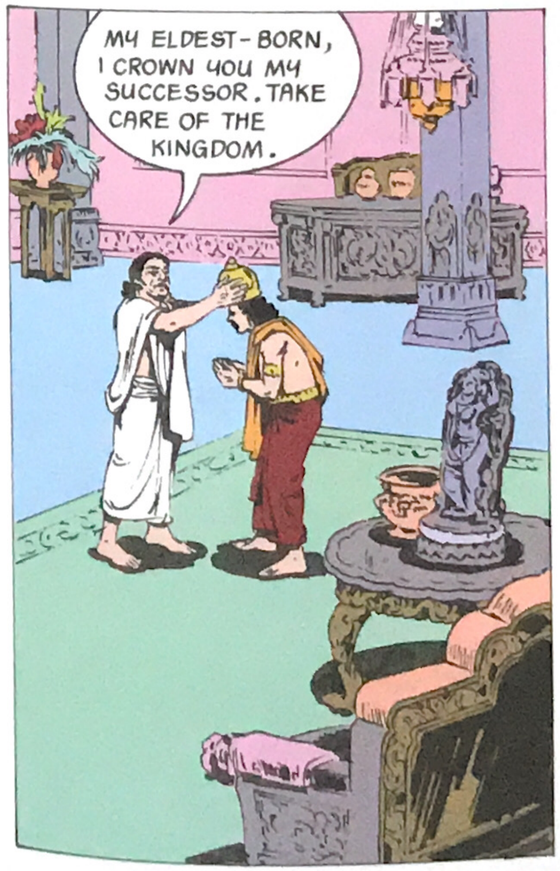
I SEE THE UNFAIR PRINCIPLE OF MIGHT IS RIGHT. IN KATTIYANGARAN'S CASE... EVEN IN MY CASE...


...THOUGH I WAS THE RIGHTFUL HEIR TO HEMANGADA, ONLY BY MY MIGHT COULD I FINALLY WREST POWER. IF THIS BE THE BASIS OF WORLDLY LIFE, I WANT NO MORE OF IT.


THAT EVENING WHEN JIVAKA RETURNED TO THE PALACE, HE FELT A SENSE OF RESTLESSNESS.

MOTHER, I TOO HAVE HEARD THE CALL.


JIVAKA ENTERED HIS ROOMS. HE EMERGED IN THE WHITE ROBES OF A JAIN MONK.


MY ELDEST-BORN, I CROWN YOU MY SUCCESSOR. TAKE CARE OF THE KINGDOM.

JIVAKA SOUGHT THE FEET OF AN ACHARYA...
...AND LATER ATTAINED NIRVANA.